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## Cascade Steel Mills ready to strike

By Don McIntosh

Workers at Cascade Steel Rolling Mills in McMinnville may go on strike if they don't have an acceptable union contract offer by Aug. 1.

Profitable scrap metal recycler Schnitzer Steel is paying CEO Tamara Lundgren over \$9 million a year while offering raises that lag behind inflation in negotiations over a new contract for the 280 members of United Steelworkers Local 8378. Schnitzer also wants to diminish dental benefits and make workers pay a much greater portion of their health insurance premiums.

Millworker Tim Davis, a member of the union bargaining team, says he and his co-workers made concessions in previous contracts and they're in no mood to do that again at a time when the company

is thriving. A continued construction boom is creating demand for mill products like rebar and wire rod that's used to make nails; both output and prices are up. Meanwhile, foreign competition is down thanks to the 25% tariffs President Donald Trump imposed on foreign steel. And shareholders are reaping the benefits of Trump's 40% cut in the corporate income tax rate.

But in bargaining with the union over a new three-year contract, Schnitzer Steel is proposing annual raises of 2.25%. Consumer prices in the region are rising 2.9% a year, according to the latest figures. Local 8378 negotiators are proposing 4%. Currently wages at the mill range from \$22.17 an hour for utility workers to \$31.58 for millwrights and \$35.05 for electricians.

### Concessions last time

Workers already lost ground to inflation in their last contract, which specified annual raises of 1% a year. Workers also agreed in that contract to a much less generous production bonus formula (bonuses fell from thousands of dollars a year to just hundreds). And they agreed to pay a greater share of the health insurance premium: Their contribution increased by 1% a year and now stands at 16%.

Now Schnitzer wants to ratchet up workers' share of the premium even more—by 4% a year, which would bring them to 28% by the end of the contract—close to what management calls “the Schnitzer standard” in which employees now

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## Butch Lewis Act advances in House

House Democrats could pass a bill to rescue distressed union pension plans

bill, addressing changes that fell within its jurisdiction. The 26-18 vote also was on party lines.

Following five-and-a-half-hours of debate and voting on Republican-member amendments, the U.S. House Ways & Means Committee on July 10 approved legislation to establish federal loans for troubled multi-employer pension plans. The Rehabilitation for Multi-employer Pensions Act of 2019 (H.R. 397) passed on a party-line vote of 25-to-17.

In June, the House Education & Labor Committee approved a similar version of the

The House Appropriations Committee also shares jurisdiction over the legislation, but it is not clear when the committee will act. The various changes to H.R. 397 will have to be reconciled in the House Rules Committee prior to the bill moving to the full House, where it is likely to pass.

Also known as the Butch Lewis Act—named after an Ohio truck driver and member of the Teamsters Central States

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From left, Corey Hanley, Justas Porta, William Jackson outside the soon-to-be-completed Hyatt Hotel in Portland.

## ON THE JOB with Elevator Constructors #23

By Don McIntosh

Corey Hanley, 45, found his calling in 2007.

Back then he worked a desk job as an engineering draftsman for a dental equipment maker, and couldn't seem to rise above a wage ceiling of \$20 an hour.

Twelve years later he builds and maintains the elevators and escalators that make possible Portland's high-rise skyline. As

a journeyman member of International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 23, he earns a wage of \$54.32 an hour plus \$39.74 an hour in benefits.

“I love this trade, because there's so much to it,” Hanley says. “You have to know mathematics, physics, mechanical, engineering, and electrical.”

Elevator constructors are among the first and last workers

on a high-rise construction site. The work begins when a several-ton “cassette” is lowered by crane onto rubber isolation pads on machine beams at the top of a building. [The cassette is the machine that raises and lowers the elevator cab that will be constructed below.] Once the cassette is welded to the beam, ele-

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