

PEOPLE

New wage and hour chief comes to Oregon from the national union movement

The top Washington, D.C., lobbyist for North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) is starting a new assignment: Oregon Wage and Hour Administrator. Hired by Oregon Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle, Sonia Ramirez began her new position July 8.

Wage and Hour administrator oversees staff responsible for enforcing a range of vital workers' rights laws, from minimum wage and overtime rules to child labor, farm and forest labor contracting laws, and requirements that contractors pay the prevailing wage on public construction projects.

As NABTU government affairs director in Washington, D.C., Ramirez fought to defend the federal prevailing wage law, known as Davis-Bacon, from attacks by union foes in Congress. She served nine years in that capacity. Before that, she was a lobbyist on immigration policy for the national AFL-CIO.



Sonia Ramirez is a former top lobbyist for the national building trades.

Photo courtesy of Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

Ramirez met Hoyle through NABTU when Hoyle went to Washington as a state legislator, but Hoyle was as surprised as any when Ramirez decided to make a career change and apply for the job in Oregon. Ramirez sees it as a continuation by other means of her work on behalf of working people.

Ramirez grew up bilingual in

a building trades union household in Los Angeles, the youngest of nine children of parents who immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Her father, formerly a union member in Mexico, was a member of Laborers Local 300 in Los Angeles for 50 years.

Growing up, her father's union meant food on the table, and a chance to see Santa Claus at the union hall every year.

Later, at NABTU, she became a journeyman member of her father's local by invitation of national Laborers Union president Terry O'Sullivan. Even now as wage and hour administrator, she maintains her membership in the union.

"I'm well aware of what is at stake, and the political forces that pile up against workers," Ramirez told the Labor Press about her new position. "Enforcing [these laws] is a very significant responsibility that I take wholeheartedly."

UNION DEMOCRACY

Challenger outpolls incumbent in IBEW Local 48 officer elections

Members of one of Oregon's biggest construction unions have voted to replace an incumbent with new leadership. In mail ballots counted June 21, Garth Bachman was elected business manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48, outpolling two-term incumbent Gary Young by 11 votes; the tally was 624 to 613.



Garth Bachman



Wayne Chow

Wayne Chow was re-elected to a second term as president of the local.

Business manager is a full-time position, responsible for overseeing union reps, organizers, and support staff. Local 48 represents over 5,000 electricians in Oregon and Southwest Washington. It is headquartered in Northeast Portland.

Bachman grew up in Portland in a union household. His father worked at the Freightliner truck plant and the shipyard as a member of the Machinists, and his mother was a clerk in the maintenance department at Portland Public Schools.

"I remember my dad coming home on a Saturday soaking wet from walking a picket line," Bachman told the Labor Press. "If the grocery workers were on strike, he would go and volunteer help them picket."

Bachman's interest in electrical work was sparked by a shop class at Benson Polytechnic High School. In his senior year, he got an after school job at Friberg Electric, and after graduation, he went on to earn an associates degree in Industrial Automation and Robotics Technology at Mt. Hood Community College. He became a Local 48 apprentice in 1989 and got active in the union after becoming a journeyman in October 1990.

One son followed him into the trade and is a Local 48 member; another is a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16.

In his 30-year electrical career, Bachman has mostly worked at Intel, the last two-

and-a-half years as an employee of OEG. For the last three years, Bachman has served as an elected member of the Local 48 Examining Board, which administers an electrical knowledge test to applicants for membership who haven't gone through the union's regular apprenticeship program.

As business manager, Bachman said he wants to make sure union representatives make a bigger presence on job sites, talking to members and stewards to make sure the contract

is enforced. He wants to improve representation of apprentices and material handlers so they know their rights as union members. And he wants to work to improve funding of the union-sponsored Edison pension plan.

He also wants to implement "reverse book layoff" in which traveling electricians would be let go before local electricians who are members of Local 48 ... if and when the construction boom ends and layoffs start to occur.

Most Local 48 members work under a master agreement with the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), the union-signatory employer group. The current agreement opens up for renegotiation of wages in the next few months, and expires Dec. 31, 2020. Bachman says he'd like to push in the next contract for later start times and restoration of shift differential pay, among other things.

Other officers elected or re-elected were:

Vice President Dave Jacobsen

Recording Secretary Kennitha Wade

Treasurer John Sargent

Executive Board Christina Daniels,

Marshall McGrady, Steve Hussey, Kat Smith, Jakob Juntunen, Paul C. New

Examining Board Alan Davidson

Delegate to the International


Convention Scott Zadow, Marshall McGrady, Dave Jacobsen, Kat Smith, Kennitha Wade, Donna Hammond, Paul New, Steven Hussey.



Raymond Thomas



James Coon



Cynthia Newton



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Melissa Haggerty



Sydney Montanaro



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