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IN THIS ISSUE

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS RATIFIES CONTRACTS

600 craft, custodial and cafeteria workers get raises | Page 3

MAYOR WHEELER FAILS TO GET LABOR COUNCIL

BACKING Support falls short of 2/3. | Page 8

Meeting Notices p.4

Oregon Dems go union p.7

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

TriMet stuck on ending apprenticeship

By Don McIntosh

Months of pushback from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757—and a public campaign by Oregon Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle—have so far failed to persuade TriMet management to put the brakes on a plan to end its apprenticeship programs for bus and light rail mechanics.

Outside the public eye, it's skilled maintenance mechanics who keep TriMet vehicles in operation. Working in three massive garages, 165 bus mechanics and 123 light rail mechanics maintain and repair 703 buses and 145 light rail vehicles (LRVs).

Nearly all were trained in an in-house apprenticeship program that's highly valued by rank-and-file TriMet employees—both the mechanics who went through the training themselves and fuelers and bus cleaners who came to work at TriMet in hopes that they could one day



WHAT IF TRIMET LISTENED TO THOSE WHO DO THE WORK? At TriMet's Center Garage, bus mechanics Gabe Binkley, Ben Murphy and Sam Morrison say scrapping apprenticeship is a terrible idea, not because outside hires are bad diesel mechanics, but because buses are so different from trucks.

enroll and become mechanics. At TriMet, fuelers and cleaners make 18.02 to \$26.09 an hour, while journeyman bus mechanics earn a base rate of \$33.37 an hour, which can add up to \$70,000 a year. But TriMet has added no new apprentices to the

training programs in over a year. Instead, the transit agency has been hiring diesel mechanics from outside the agency.

The problem with that? "There's a huge difference be-

Turn to Page 2



Clark College strikers win big gains

Not only raises of \$10,000 a year, but a path to parity for lower-paid part-time faculty.

By Don McIntosh

After 15 months of frustrating negotiations, it took just two days of striking for about 400 community college faculty to win the best union contract they've ever had.

Members of Clark College Association for Higher Educa-

tion (CCAHE) voted 257 to 9 on the third day of the strike, Jan. 15, to approve the new three-year collective bargaining agreement. The new contract includes raises of as much as \$11,064 a year, and for the first time puts part-time faculty pay on a path to parity with full-timers.

"There were people crying, they were so happy to get these raises," said CCAHE President Suzanne Southerland. "It was a significant win for everybody."

The new agreement includes a 1% raise retroactive to July 1, 2017, when the previous three-year union contract expired; plus a 9% raise retroactive to July 1, 2019. Salaries for full-time Clark College faculty will now start at \$62,049 and top out at \$87,403.

But possibly even more important: A side agreement that's part of the contract will reduce the college's incentive to shift course load to lower-paid part-time faculty who teach on limited-term contracts. Known as "adjuncts" in academic lingo, the part-time faculty have up to now been paid a flat rate for each credit hour they teach. Now they'll be paid a salary based on their course load that's calculated as a percentage of what the college would have paid if a full-timer taught it, and that percentage will increase each year. Part-timers will begin making 65% of the full-time rate, and that will rise to 67% in July 2020, 69% in July 2021, and 72% in July 2022. Southerland said the

Turn to Page 6

LAWMAKING SEASON

OREGON

Oregon's union movement would like the Democratic majority to do a few things when the Oregon Legislature begins its every-other-year 'short' session Feb. 5.



making under \$97,311, with annual adjustments for inflation.

For Oregon labor unions, some top legislative priorities include bills to:

Make striking workers eligible for unemployment benefits Union workers and their families shouldn't have to go hungry in order to resist unfair contract offers by employers. Three other states provide unemployment benefits to workers who are out on strike. Oregon should become the fourth.

Let us pay in cash Cash is supposed to be legal tender, right? But we're seeing retailers emerge that won't accept cash, only cards. You wouldn't think you'd need it, but a bill backed by UFCW would require retailers to accept cash.

Say no to non-competes It's an employer abuse that's lately grown rapidly: Making employees sign promises not to go to work for a competitor for a while after leaving a job. Oregon lawmakers have passed laws to rein in the practice. A bill this session would limit non-competes further, setting a maximum six month term, and disallowing them for workers

Give our college teachers health benefits As public universities and community colleges shift course load onto part-time faculty, many instructors end up working part-time gigs at more than one institution that add up to full time. They should have health benefits.

Say no to IRAPs Proposed by the Trump Administration, industry-recognized apprenticeship programs (IRAPs) would be a new kind of loosely-regulated training program that doesn't require the same instruction, pay scales or journeyman graduation rates as existing federally registered apprenticeship programs. A bill backed by Oregon building trades unions would bar state or local public money from being spent on IRAPs.

Guarantee adequate public defense A bill backed by AFSCME, which represents public defenders, would put Oregon on course to end the severe underfunding of the public defender system.

WASHINGTON

Washington's Legislature has been in session since Jan. 13. Union leaders don't expect great leaps forward in the short 60-day election year session, but there's still good lawmakers can do for workers.



Top priorities for the Washington State Labor Council include bills to:

Protect public employee privacy Anti-union canvassers have been showing up at the homes of public employees, trying to talk them into dropping out of the union. How'd they get there? The state is releasing names and birthdays, and the anti-union group uses that to track them down. Unions are asking lawmakers to make birthdays exempt from disclosure.

End scheduling abuses A bill would give workers at large food and retail businesses the right to two-week notice of schedules, adequate rests between shifts, and flexibility to swap shifts. Oregon has it; Washington should too.

Require bid listing Some public works contractors alter their lists of subcontractors after winning bids so they can pay lower wage and boost profits at the expense of taxpayers (and project quality). A bill would end "post-bid shopping" by having subcontractors listed in all bids.