

## UNION ORGANIZING

# Enviro nonprofit would rather lay off all staff than deal with union

By Noah Wass

Last month we reported what happened when all five workers at Center for Sustainable Economy (CSE) announced their intent to join Communications Workers of America Local 7901: Management at the tiny climate change nonprofit hired the union-busting law firm Bullard Law, and suspended and threatened key union supporter Nick Caleb. Advised by Bullard, CSE even filed an unfair labor practice charge against *itself* — alleging to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that Caleb was a supervisor and thus it was illegal for him to support a union drive.

All that drew some pretty bad publicity. Since then, CSE dropped Bullard, withdrew the charge, and said it would voluntarily recognize the union.

Time for union supporters to celebrate? Not so fast. Now CSE's husband-and-wife leadership team plans to "restructure" the 25-year-old organization and lay off all staff in September. Citing "human resource challenges" and "growing pains," a July 22 email from CSE presi-

dent John Talberth gives workers three options.

Option one: Set up their own organization, with CSE managers' help, and migrate CSE's grant money to fund it.

Option two: Go to work for CSE executive director Daphne Wysham at a new non-profit she registered the day before, called Just Climate, Inc. (The email says she commits to voluntarily recognize a union if one appears there.)

Option 3: Become independent contractors (no union rights) and continue working for CSE.

"But I am not sure that CSE could legally make such a transition right now and want to be clear I am not advocating this change," Talberth wrote. [No kidding: The NLRB would likely see this as a transparent attempt to evade the union.]

Caleb, staff attorney for CSE's climate justice program, says he was told the restructuring plan was in the works a long time. The union isn't buying it. Local 7901 President A.J. Mendoza believes the announcement is a response to the union's organizing efforts.

## University of Oregon and Oregon AFL-CIO host free talks for union members

This summer, the Oregon AFL-CIO is teaming up with the Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon to bring national experts and labor leaders to Oregon union members via Zoom calls. Here are the upcoming talks:

■ **August 12: Education in the time of COVID** Presenters are Diane Ravitch, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education; and Oregon Education Association President John Larson..

■ **August 26: The state of Oregon's budget and Oregon workers** Presented by Oregon AFL-CIO political director Jess Giannettino Villatoro; and an Oregon legislative leader.

All talks are free and open to all Oregon union members. Talks will start at 5 p.m. and go for one hour, with time for questions and comments from audience members. Register at <https://bit.ly/38Srn8m> for one or more of the talks, and you'll be sent a link to the Zoom call shortly before the event.



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