

Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President



A threat to democracy

On Aug. 13, Donald Trump said he opposes much-needed funding for the United States Postal Service because he doesn't want to see it used for mail-in voting this November. This was within a few days of Trump himself requesting his own mail-in absentee ballot from Florida. Along with systematic action by this administration to undermine and erode the critical functions of the Postal Service, the brazenness of the comment should alarm each and every one of us.

As Oregonians, we have enjoyed over 20 years of successful elections using a vote-by-mail system. It's something many voters today, especially younger voters, take for granted as it's the only way they have ever cast a ballot. In the midst of a global pandemic, voting from the safety of your own home must be accessible to everyone, in every state. Period.

To say that the Postal Service is truly a bedrock of our democracy is no exaggeration. In fact, our founders saw a robust mail system so critical to the fledgling nation's welfare and political cohesion that they included the Postal Clause in the U.S. Constitution, creating a public postal service and showcasing its critical role in achieving their vision of democracy. Affordable, accessible, and universal are just a few ways to describe our public Postal Service today, and those descriptions have not changed throughout its nearly 250-year history.

As trade unionists, we know that our institutions, businesses, and employers are nothing without our people. The people of the Postal Service have made it the valued institution that it is, the institution that year in and year out is ranked as Americans' most beloved government agency. Whether it's your friendly neighborhood letter carrier, the clerk at your local Post Office that sells you stamps or helps you send gifts to family across the country, or the sorters, processors, and machine operators that make sure your package arrives on time, the people make it all possible. The Postal Service is also the second largest employer of veterans in America. Only the Department of Defense employs more.

So, I've got to wonder, why would a beloved government agency with widespread public support and a business model that allows it to remain competitive against other private delivery services be the target of attacks by the Trump administration? Why would the President appoint a Postmaster General in the middle of a presidential election who has unleashed a flurry of "reforms" that have dramatically slowed down delivery times, physically removed accessible mailboxes from Oregon communities, and warned Oregon's Secretary of State, as well as elections officials nationwide, that the Postal Service may not be able to deliver last-minute ballots on time in the upcoming election?

America's Labor Movement has been beating the drum, mobilizing in every corner of the nation, and urgently calling for the necessary relief and stimulus from Congress since day one of the pandemic, and in earnest since May 15 when the U.S. House passed the HEROES Act. This comprehensive bill, that includes vital and life-line funding for the Postal Service, has been sitting on Mitch McConnell's desk for nearly 100 days and while Senate Republicans have gone on vacation.

Postal Service workers in Oregon are fortunate to have real champions in Congress who aren't afraid to go toe-to-toe with the Trump Administration or their Republican colleagues in defense of this vital public institution. And Oregon's Labor Movement will never stop fighting back against Corporate Raiders disguised as Postmaster Generals, anti-worker agency administrators, or obscene, authoritarian attempts to rig an election. Democracy is truly on the ballot in November. Which side are YOU on?

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.



In 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton attended the AFL-CIO's Union Industry Show, held in Portland. The show was previously held in Portland in 1962.

Longview area strike lasts 115 days. Big Arco module project at Swan Island awarded to Seattle union contractor. **1989:** Lockout bill passes Oregon Legislature; so does measure with nation's highest minimum wage. Boeing strike by Machinists idles 57,000, most in Seattle area, for 48 days. 120 members of UFCW Local 555 get part of \$7.1 million nationwide settlement from ConAgra unfair labor practices. Caterpillar closes former Gerlinger and Towmotor plant in Dallas, displacing members of Machinists Local 1506, moves operation to Mexico. Mine Workers join AFL-CIO. Office and Professional Employees Local 11 signs "Joint Accord" with



15,000 public employees—members of the Oregon Public Employees Union—struck for one week in 1995. It was the largest public workers' strike in state history.

Northwest Natural Gas that draws national attention. Machinists strike Eastern Airlines. **1990:** Representatives of labor and business meet weekly at Mahonia Hall in Salem to discuss Oregon's workers' compensation system, resulting in the Legislature passing sweeping changes—not all to labor's liking. Fullman Company of Portland signs agreement with Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 after two-and-a-half years of picketing — the longest labor dispute in Oregon mechanical contracting history. Greyhound bus drivers and mechanics strike because the company

won't bargain in good faith with Amalgamated Transit Union. Providence Hospital placed on the Unfair List for use of nonunion contractors who failed to meet area wage standards. IBEW members strike GTE in Oregon, Washington and Northern California for 19 days. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declares the northern spotted owl a threatened species. UFCW Local 555 strikes Portland-area supermarkets for 24 days before approving a 4-year contract. Union-built Oregon Convention Center opened. Oregon's Ballot Measure 5 passes, placing severe limitations on prop-

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