

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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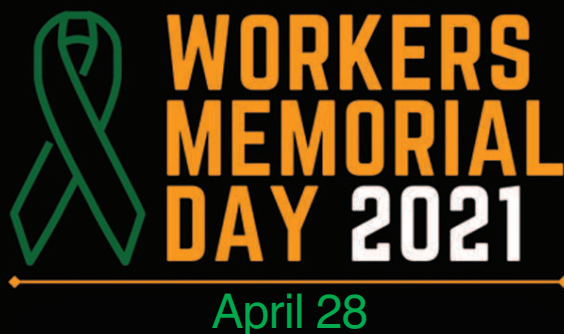
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Workers Memorial Day is observed every year on April 28. It's a day to honor workers who have died on the job, to remember the suffering experienced by families and workers in all trades, and to recommit to the fight for a safe and healthy work environment for all workers.

STATEWIDE—Oregon AFL-CIO will hold a virtual memorial service Wednesday, April 28, at 12:30 p.m. on Facebook Live and YouTube. You can RSVP at orafclcio.org/events/2021/4/28/2021-workers-memorial-day

PORTLAND—The Northwest Oregon Labor Council will hold a virtual memorial service on April 28 at 4 p.m. The link is aflcio.zoom.us/j/87688965389

Communities and Postal Workers United and the **Portland Area American Postal Workers Union** will hold a memorial service and rally at noon April 28 at the East Portland Post Office, 1020 SE 7th Ave. For info, go to facebook.com/events/1557460144595570

UNION ORGANIZING

Amazon workers reject union

Workers at an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, delivered a lopsided “no” vote in what was surely the most closely watched union election of recent years. The National Labor Relations Board announced the tally on April 9: 738 votes in favor of joining the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), and 1,798 against. Over 500 other ballots were left uncounted because of challenges by the company or the union, but that would not have been enough to change the outcome. All told, about 53% of the approximately 5,876 Bessemer warehouse workers cast ballots.

For union supporters it was a tough end to a campaign that drew support from a majority of the public in polls, and from figures ranging from Bernie Sanders and Stacey Abrams to the NFL Players Association and the rapper Killer Mike.

Since its founding, Amazon has aggressively fought unionization, and it did so again at Bessemer, holding antiunion meetings at work, texting antiunion messages to workers multiple times a day, and even posting anti-union



messages in restroom stalls.

Based in New York, RWDSU is a semi-autonomous affiliate of United Food and Commercial Workers, representing a little under 52,000 workers in over a dozen industries. RWDSU initially sought to represent a smaller group of union supporters at the Bessemer site, but Amazon lawyers pushed to hold the vote among the full workforce, and won. RWDSU is reportedly seeking to overturn the election results on the grounds that Amazon trampled labor law in multiple ways.

“We’re not going anywhere,” declared AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka after the loss, saying the fight for justice and dignity and safety endures. —DM

NATIONAL

Biden’s \$2 trillion infrastructure plan

“It’s not a plan that tinkers around the edges,” said President Joe Biden, announcing his American Jobs Plan March 31 at a Carpenters union training center in Pittsburgh. “It’s a once in a generation investment.”

The American Jobs Plan is Biden’s proposal for Congress to approve \$2 trillion in federal investment in infrastructure, research, training and expansion of home care over a decade.

America has been underinvesting in infrastructure. Public investment as a share of the economy has fallen by more than 40% since the 1960s. This year, in its most recent report, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave U.S. infrastructure an overall C- grade.

Biden’s proposal would amount to investing about 1% of annual gross domestic product per year over eight years. The plan includes some things not conventionally classed as infrastructure, like in-home health care. It also calls for strengthening workers’ right to join unions. In fact, unions are mentioned two dozen times in the 12,000-word White House fact sheet explaining the proposal.

Biden wants to require employers benefiting from the plan’s investments to follow strong labor standards and remain neutral when employees seek to organize a union; wants to tie federal investments in clean energy and infrastructure to prevailing wages; calls for more goods shipped on U.S.-flagged vessels to be staffed by American workers; and even calls on Congress to pass the PRO Act, which would rewrite labor law to make it easier for workers to get a union contract.

Biden proposes to pay for the infrastructure spending by eliminating corporate tax loopholes and partially rolling back Trump’s corporate income tax cut. In 2017, Trump signed legislation cutting the rate from 35% to 21%. Biden proposes to raise it to 28%. Biden’s plan would also make it harder for companies to avoid paying taxes on both U.S. income and profits stashed abroad, ending the scandal of profitable companies including 91 Fortune 500 companies paying zero federal income tax. The two strategies would raise up to \$2.5 trillion over 15 years. —DM

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN

-  **\$115 billion** to modernize 20,000 miles of highways and roads, fix 10 economically significant bridges, and repair 10,000 smaller bridges
-  **\$85 billion** for public transit
-  **\$80 billion** to repair improve and expand Amtrak rail service
-  **\$174 billion** to expand electric vehicle production, build charging stations, and electrify buses
-  **\$25 billion** to upgrade airports
-  **\$300 billion** to boost manufacturing
-  **\$213 billion** to build, maintain and retrofit affordable housing
-  **\$100 billion** to expand high-speed broadband
-  **\$400 billion** for clean energy
-  **\$111 billion** to eliminate all lead pipes and service lines and upgrade and modernize water systems
-  **\$100 billion** to build high-voltage capacity power lines and clean up unused oil and gas wells and mines
-  **\$400 billion** to expand access to home care for the elderly and disabled and raise wages for workers
-  **\$100 billion** to upgrade and build new public schools
-  **\$180 billion** in scientific research

Staff at the Oregon Legislature can unionize, Board rules

Legislative assistants who work for individual Oregon lawmakers could soon be the first such workers in the nation to unionize. On Dec. 8, IBEW Local 89 turned in union authorization cards signed by a majority of the workers. But on Dec. 20, attorneys for the Oregon Department of Justice filed objections, arguing that the Legislature isn’t a “public employer” under the state’s public sector union law, that this group would not be an appropriate bargaining unit because they work for 90 separate and very political bosses, and that they’re all “supervisory” or “confidential” employees.

The two sides traded arguments at a Feb. 25 hearing in

front of an administrative law judge. Union attorney Dan Hutzenbiler said Democrat and Republican lawmakers may quarrel, but their staff work together and get along. To say they couldn’t be in the same union would be like saying Blazers players can’t be in the same union as Lakers players, Hutzenbiler said.

On April 6, Oregon’s Employment Relations Board (ERB) issued a ruling rejecting all the objections. The Legislature makes the laws, ERB said, and could exclude its own employees, but didn’t do that when it wrote the law. ERB ordered a union election for roughly 180 workers to go forward. —DM