

## UNION ORGANIZING



Medical interpreters, now in Oregon AFSCME, celebrate their union win.

## Medical interpreters unite

As part of AFSCME they'll push for better pay and standards.

The State of Oregon on April 23 recognized a union for as many as 500 medical interpreters who translate for Medicaid patients who don't speak English.

Because the interpreters are independent contractors, they wouldn't normally have a legal process to unionize, except that Oregon AFSCME helped pass a bill in 2019, HB 2231, that made unionization possible. Under the law, interpreters who are hired through a registry maintained by the Oregon Health Authority can unionize.

About 250 interpreters signed cards to join Oregon AFSCME, but the exact number in the new bargaining unit isn't known. Alma Raya, an organizer with Oregon AFSCME, said that's because the list of roughly 800 names on the registry includes several

hundred who are no longer working as interpreters. Raya estimates 300 to 500 people on the list are actively working.

Efforts to contact interpreters on the list began in January 2020, but slowed because of the pandemic.

Maria Fiallos, who works as a medical interpreter for Spanish speakers, says she and other interpreters started talking about unionizing more than three years ago, before the law was passed. Medical interpreters in Washington had won big improvements through a similar process. Today the Washington interpreters make \$42 an hour for their work, while the Oregon interpreters make \$18 to \$25 an hour. And because they're independent contractors, that's it —no benefits of any kind. Fiallos figures they have nowhere to go but up.

"The hardest part is yet to come," Alma says —contract negotiations. —DM

## Want to run for office?

Oregon Labor Candidate School is taking applications

Would you or one of your union co-workers make a good elected representative? Oregon Labor Candidate School (OLCS) was founded to get union members elected to public office—in order to push for policies that benefit working people and reflect the values of the labor movement. Trainees spend one Saturday a month for six months learning the mechanics of political campaigns.

Applications are currently open for upcoming sessions. The next one—aimed at candidates in rural Oregon—starts June 19. It's exclusively for

union members and staff in Central, Eastern, Southern, and Coastal Oregon. The deadline to apply is June 1.

After that, for union members in the Portland metro area and Willamette Valley who are interested in running for office, the next training will start in October; the deadline to apply is August 1.

Questions? Contact Kevin at 971-241-6990 or [kevin@oregonlaborcandidateschool.org](mailto:kevin@oregonlaborcandidateschool.org).

**APPLY ONLINE**  
[oregonlaborcandidateschool.org/application](http://oregonlaborcandidateschool.org/application)

## CULTURE

## Union logos get a little love

A new Twitter account dedicated to sharing union logos has quickly developed a fan base.

By Don McIntosh

Twitter can be a constant conflict zone. But it can also be a place of whimsy, where people pursue their passions and spread joy. Created March 15, the Twitter account @UnionLogos tweets little doses of joy three or four times each weekday, each one a shout-out to the beauty and symbolism of a union logo. Tweets can feature union logos from anywhere in the world, any point in time, and even fictional unions.

The account is the project of Sam Nelson, an officer in the Washington-Baltimore NewsGuild (CWA) who works as an organizer for the national office of Jobs With Justice. A collector of union buttons and stickers, he created the account because he kept seeing great union logos.

"These are beautiful things that workers are creating for their own unions," Nelson told the *Labor Press* by phone. "In the past 10 years there's been a revitalization of good graphic design."

IBEW locals seem to be especially creative with their logos,



like the electric pirate of Local 915 in Tampa, or the spark-spitting gator of Local 606 in Orlando. [On Facebook there's actually a 5,200-member group, IBEW Sticker Swap, where

members trade the stickers of their locals.]

Members of Nelson's own union, the NewsGuild, have also been having fun with logos. Amid a historic surge of newsroom unionizing, new locals are being formed around the country, with logos like a crab with pincers shaped like pen tips for the Chesapeake NewsGuild, or a logo featuring flying bats for the Austin NewsGuild.

Augmenting Nelson's own collection, Twitter followers are sending him their unions' logos. He schedules them to post, sometimes as part of "theme" days. For April Fools, the theme was fictional unions, like the International Brotherhood of Jazz Dancers, Pastry Chefs and Nuclear Technicians, which made an appearance on a 1993 episode of *The Simpsons*. On April 20 (4/20) he'll tweet logos of recently formed cannabis workers unions.

It turns out the Twitterverse is teeming with labor nerds and collectors. Nelson's @UnionLogos account immediately made a splash, and within two months had over 2,900 followers.

Says Nelson: "I've been getting a lot of feedback from people saying, 'I've wanted someone to do this!'"

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