



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

Winning at Kaiser

Coming off of “Striketober” and heading straight into “Strikesgiving” has gripped the nation with constant headlines, growing momentum, and a sense of long overdue wind at the backs of working people. Here in Oregon, Nabisco workers had just come off of a months-long strike against their multinational, publicly traded employer as the Striketober hashtag was beginning to make the rounds. And a strike database from Cornell University shows that more than 250 strikes have taken place since the start of this year.

As AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler put it recently, this rise in strike activity and worker action is “a healthy response to imbalances of power created by employers who believe they should be able to squeeze more and more out of the workers who make their companies profitable.”

As worker advocates, it's easy to get wrapped up in the excitement of a historic moment like this, to be energized by the bravery of working people and the sense of solidarity that is running not just through these picket lines, but deeper into our communities as broad and sweeping support for strikes is on the rise. This is all right, it's good, it's

how many of us feel, and it's an easy reaction.

What can be a bit harder at times is to not lose sight of what is still so wrong about our economy, the dangerous and often unchanging conditions that too many working people face every single day, and the specifics of the greed at play within corporate boardrooms. Unfortunately, it's also hard to keep track of the dizzying trends of rising inequality or the fact that billionaire union buster Elon Musk has seen his wealth balloon by nearly \$300 billion just over the course of the pandemic.

Over the last year and a half, one of the things that has remained a constant source of anger for many of us is the talk by employers that isn't met with action, the hollow signs like “heroes work here” or phrases like “you are essential” that get used to describe the working people who have gotten us through the most difficult period in our lifetime. And the industry where these hollow words perhaps anger me the most is in healthcare. Now, as workers have prepared to take a stand and withhold their labor in what would have been one of the largest healthcare

strikes in history at Kaiser Permanente, the specifics of what led to this massive strike are worth reviewing.

In Oregon, the brave members of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP), AFT Local 5017, said “enough is enough” alongside tens of thousands of healthcare workers at Kaiser around the country. These “healthcare heroes” have remained on the front lines, continued to care for sick patients, even when it means great risk to themselves, and remain steadfastly committed to quality, patient-centered care.

So what was it that pushed tens of thousands of brave healthcare workers to prepare to join the striking ranks during Strikesgiving? Disrespect. Betrayal. Corporate greed. And a race-to-the-bottom two-tier wage proposal that would further exacerbate the healthcare staffing crisis and create massive disparities among their workforce. All at a time when Kaiser has remained so financially strong that they were able to return COVID-19 relief money while other health care systems struggled to make ends meet.

Kaiser's proposal would have cut pay for new health care workers be-

tween 26% and 39% at a time when there is complete panic and chaos about a nursing shortage. More than 30 Kaiser executives made over \$1 million according to their most recent SEC filing. That's why workers were ready to strike, that's why they didn't back down, and that's why they won.

With Strikesgiving in full motion leading into whatever the December slogan will be, it is clear that we are witnessing a collective moment of strength, in which working people are standing arm-in-arm against corporate giants and winning.

There is nothing that can stop a united labor movement, and the Oregon labor movement will continue to stand with unions across the country in fights like Kaiser, Kellogg's, and so many others. It's clear that we have an entire movement and communities everywhere ready to fight for as long as it takes to win fair and equitable contracts, just like we saw at Kaiser.

The lesson of the Kaiser strike is that when you take one of us on, you take all of us on.

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



Holiday Toy Day of Giving & LCSA Fall Safety-Net Fundraiser

Serving Labor Families In Need



The prolonged harm and displacement the past 18 months have had on our union community cannot be overstated. As Organized Labor's safety-net organization, LCSA continues to see the devastation this has caused families – an increase in housing displacement, mental health emergencies, increased childcare costs and mounting medical bills. Our working class continues to be destabilized.

Help us bring holiday joy to our union family with some cherished toys, a holiday meal, and gifts for the whole family. Additionally, any funds raised in excess of the event's costs will be used for LCSA assistance programs throughout the year – helping these union families with rent, utility and food resources.

Donate to Support Presents From Partners & LCSA Safety Net



Presents From Partners (LCSA, Inc.)
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