

UNIONS RALLY FOR RIGHTS IN OREGON

Hundreds of union members rallied outside the state Capitol on Monday, March 7, concerned about Oregon's public workers and the preservation of collective bargaining rights.

"Our message today is, 'Don't balance the budget on the back of public employees,'" said Tom Chamberlin, president of Oregon's American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which sponsored the rally.

"Our movement is on the move, and we have captured the imagination of the American public," he said. "We haven't done that in a long time."

Waving signs and shouting in unison, demonstrators demanded laborers' rights in Oregon to be upheld. They also declared solidarity with union workers in Wisconsin, whose abilities to negotiate pensions and healthcare benefits have recently come under siege.

Gov. John Kitzhaber assured the crowd that Oregon would not be taking any cues from Wisconsin as the state attempts to tackle overspending.

"I have made it clear that I'm going to ask our public employees to make some concessions to help us through these tough fiscal times," he said. "But those concessions will be made across a bargaining table, through our collective bargaining process and with mutual respect."

As Oregonians await the release of a new two-year budget, Kitzhaber announced plans for greater and more innovative job creation in the future. He promised to protect the interest of unions, but asked for help in passing legislation to revamp Oregon's health-care system.

"Because the biggest drag on economic and job creation isn't taxes. It's the cost of health care."

Sean McGarvey, secretary treasurer of the Building and Construction Trades Department, described negotiation as fundamental to any business transaction in any state.

"Workers deserve collective bargaining rights," he said. "Our brothers and sisters don't ask for me any more or any less than what is provided to every other entity that does business with a state, city, county or town."

Among the rally's attendants were members of the Oregon Economic Council, Oregon Tradeswoman Inc., small business owners and several local unions.

Although the more than 700 union members at the rally represented a diverse collection of trades, from teachers to construction workers to mail carriers, each person's jacket bore a horizontal sticker: "We are One." — *Deborah Bloom*



The charter amendment specified that the program would be entirely supported by fees based on the amount of chemicals used. But efforts to kill the TRTK law by the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and Hynix allies in the courts and the Legislature led to separating the fee structure from the amount of toxics used. The Legislature and courts forced the city to decrease fees charged to Hynix by 90 percent and double the fees charged smaller companies. — *Alan Pittman*

BILLS TARGET LAND USE PLANNING

Opponents of Oregon land use planning are pushing several bills in the 2011 Legislature that would undermine citizen access to land-use appeals and restrict citizen involvement in land-use decisions, according to Onward Oregon, www.OnwardOregon.org

- HB 2181 would make citizens who appeal local land use decisions to the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) liable for attorney fees of the prevailing party if they lose their case. Current law only holds opponents liable for attorney fees if their case is determined to be frivolous.

- HB 2182 limits opponents to a land use decision to either adjacent landowners or those who can pay a large deposit to bring a case before LUBA. "Farmers leasing land, a common circumstance throughout Oregon, will likely not be able to appeal decisions that affect their farming operations, and local advocacy groups with limited funds will likely not be able to raise the necessary deposit to do so, either," according to Onward Oregon.

- HB 2610, requested by the Oregon Home Builders Association, limits LUBA appeals for housing and industrial land use

decisions within an urban growth boundary, and for aggregate mining anywhere, to individuals who either own, rent, or lease property within 1,000 feet, or can show their property would be adversely affected by \$5,000 or more.

Initial public hearings have already been held on these bills. Track them at <http://wkly.ws/11e> or contact your state representative.

In other Legislative enviro news, SB 536, which would ban plastic checkout bags and promote reusable bags, has already had its first public hearing. The farm-to-school bill, HB 2800, was scheduled for a hearing March 9 in the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. SB 695, which would ban toxic BPA from baby bottles, sippy cups, reusable water bottles and infant formula cans, will have its first hearing before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee at 3 pm Tuesday, March 15. — *Ted Taylor*

GROW GROW GADGET GREEN GANJA

What do you do when growing your green is not green enough and costs too much green? Growers can use a variety of light sources to provide their plants with the light they need to green their weed, and they can take advantage of lower costs from more efficient lighting. With more than 12,000 patients in the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP), using less electricity for marijuana growth helps the environment, too.

According to one grower in the OMMP, who asked to be called "Scott" for the sake of privacy, growing medical marijuana with light emitting diodes (LEDs) isn't very common yet, because the lights don't have "enough penetrating power" unless

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- **Out-of-state interests** don't often pay attention to Eugene politics. But the newly empowered Tea Party is out for blood, particularly now that Strong Schools Eugene has kicked off its campaign to pass a temporary city income tax to support two Eugene school districts (see www.StrongSchoolsEugene.org).

Jeff Lozar is the Lane County leader of Americans for Prosperity (AFP), the advocacy wing of the ultra-right-wing Koch brothers of New York. Lozar and his Tea Party buddies are calling the local tax for schools "a ridiculous idea," and saying "Eugene looks to raise taxes for something that's not even its responsibility" (see <http://wkly.ws/11d>). The local AFP is in lock-step with the national group which opposes unions, health care reform, stimulus funding, green jobs, mass transit, concerns for climate change and other environmental issues. The local AFP opposes the West Eugene EmX, but supports the lawsuit against progressive county commissioners.

The AFP had a national budget of \$40 million in 2010, which is not a lot of money, but we suspect a chunk of AFP's 2011 budget will be directed against the Eugene school tax. After all, the nation is watching little Eugene and what we do here could inspire a very different kind of taxpayer revolt all over the country.

We spotted only a handful of AFP protesters at the Strong Schools kick-off Tuesday afternoon at Kelly Middle School. They were far outnumbered by parents and kids.

- Turnout for the **Public Interest Environmental Law Conference** last weekend was impressive and EW sent

half a dozen staffers and interns to the panels and talks. As usual we will be running PIELC stories for the next few weeks as space permits; and story ideas we gleaned will keep us busy for the next year. The success stories presented at PIELC provide inspiration and encouragement at a time when the challenges seem overwhelming. As Bruce Nillis of the Sierra Club told one gathering at PIELC, "Change is coming even if Congress is not ready."

PIELC is touted as an environmental law gathering, but the topics discussed are much broader in scope, addressing some of the key issues of our day. Climate change, energy, resource management, food security, justice, communication – these issues and their high level of discourse are worthy of a much larger audience. Most meeting rooms at PIELC were packed to standing room only and crowds were turned away from some keynote talks. We would love to see PIELC evolve into a truly global conference drawing many more than 3,000 people, and packing every available venue on campus, even Mac Court or Matt Court. The valiant volunteer law students who organize this event would need year-round staff support, and a much bigger budget.

- It sounds like a headline from *The Onion*: "Area Dad Mad, Thinks Teachers are Mean to His Kids." **Art Robinson** is trying to grab headlines again with an attack on Peter DeFazio and Oregon State University that OSU calls "baseless and without merit." Robinson has largely been out of the news since his Wall Street billionaire-funded attempt to win DeFazio's seat in Congress failed last

November. Robinson claims that "DeFazio supporters" at OSU, which he calls a "Democrat stronghold," are trying to prevent three of his home-schooled progeny from getting their doctorates in nuclear engineering. OSU says they've investigated the claims and found nothing; and DeFazio's office says the congressman's support of higher education has nothing to do with whatever problems the Robinson clan might be having at OSU.

What's not getting media attention is that Robinson has attacked schools before, the last time to draw attention to his online home school business. He went after Southern Oregon University, which required his daughter Arynne to take a humanities course. Robinson claims the school was intimidated by his threats of a costly telephone, fax and letter campaign by his "subscribers and home-schooling friends." Robinson campaigned on a platform that included defunding public education.

- We hear donations are slow coming in for **Project Homeless Connect**, while the need is greater than ever. This year's event is March 17 at the Fairgrounds. Last year's event served 1,402 guests with the help of 581 community volunteers and 301 service providers, from medical and legal professionals to bike mechanics and hairdressers. See Activist Alert this week for information on how to help.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com