



Political Watch

Minimum Wage Attacks Go Down in Defeat!

Sizemore Loses Bid to Keep Backers Anonymous

Bill Sizemore suffered a setback on June 2, 1997 when the U. S. Supreme Court rejected, without comment, his argument that disclosure of political campaign contributors who gave more than \$100 violated those contributors freedom of speech and political association. In doing so, the court upheld an Oregon law that requires such public disclosure.

The legal fight stems from 1994's Ballot Measure 8, a Sizemore-sponsored bill forcing state workers to take a 6% cut in salary in the form of a mandatory contribution to PERS. Although the measure passed, it was ruled unconstitutional by the Oregon Supreme Court.

During the campaign, Sizemore claimed that disclosure of his financial backers resulted in those contributors being harassed and threatened by state workers. OPEU did publish the "rogues list," and some people talked about boycotting the businesses of those who contributed to the passage of Measure 8, however, there was never any evidence of the harassment alleged by Sizemore.

The court decision is being celebrated inside and outside our Union by those who support politics taking place under public scrutiny. Sizemore has hinted that he may file a new case on this issue in federal court.



Over the past three months, unions, community organizations and religious groups have rallied repeatedly to fend off attacks on the last year's increase of the state minimum hourly wage. Led by the Oregon Restaurant Association (ORA) and the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the attacks came in the form of an omnibus bill that offered employers exemption from the minimum wage for tipped workers, agricultural workers, workers who were involved in training and workers who were receiving some sort of health benefits from their employer. The fight over the bill, HB2691, dragged on for several weeks with opponents busing citizens into the capitol on several occasions to offer crucial testimony. The fight ended with a cliff-hanging split vote on the floor caused by one Republican bolting

from his party's ranks. Efforts by some lawmakers to revive the omnibus bill failed. Other efforts have continued to move slowly through the legislature. The health care exemption continues to be pushed by the NFIB despite being

rejected twice in committee. It's ability to move through both houses successfully is not thought too likely, however, minimum wage activists remain on guard for this and other last-minute efforts to overturn the will of the voters.

Bills to Watch

As this issue of The Oregon Public Employee goes to press, the situation in the legislature remains very fluid. Situations around certain bills change daily and what are considered serious threats one week may dissolve the following week. The following bills are some which are worth watching. To find out more about specific bills, contact your local worksite organizer.

HB3222: Sponsored by Rep. Tony Corcoran, this bill would require corporations to file statements containing tax liability and related information with the Secretary of State and make such information public record. **Support.**

HB3437: Sponsored by Rep. Bryan Johnston at request of OPEU. Bill

certain social services to file with the agency documentation related to performance of the contract. **Support.**

HB3512: Sponsored by Rep. Bill Markham, this bill would require prior voter approval of all public employee collective bargaining agreements. **Oppose.**

requires persons contracting with governmental agencies for performance of

HB3163: The State Transportation Package is one of Governor Kitzhaber's top priorities for restoring and expanding transportation infrastructure, including transportation services for seniors and the disabled. It has been endorsed by OPEU. **Support.**

Spin Doctoring 101

In what can only be termed as bald-faced spin doctoring, lobbyist for the Oregon Restaurant Association (ORA) wrote to their members on May 6, 1997 to give their read on the November passage of Ballot Measure 36 to raise Oregon's minimum wage and the subsequent failures to pass exemptions to that measure during this legislative session.

After spending \$464,607 trying to beat BM36, the ORA congratulated themselves in reducing the vote margin from the 70% range down to 56%. They went on to claim that only the intervention of powerful interests like the Oregon Public Employees Union stopped them from turning ORA's strange idea of a November victory into a series of successful exemption bills.

As OPEU President Karla Spence wrote in her letter to the ORA and their members:

"In response to your allegations that Oregon Public Employees Union led the fight against HB2691 (tipped credit exemption), we would be delighted to accept that charge as an honor, but it simply isn't true. The fight to defend attacks on BM36 was led by a broad coalition of groups, labor, community and religious organizations, who shared a common vision that low income workers deserved a share of the good economy Oregon is enjoying..."

Stop Anti-Worker Attacks Now!

In order to fight effectively in the political arena, we need an informed and active membership. But, we also need the financial resources to mail literature, run radio and television ads and through other vehicles get our message to the voting public. Join the fight by joining OPEU's 2c Campaign! All you need do is complete, clip and mail the coupon at right to OPEU today!