

SEIU Local 503, OPEU

The Backbone of Oregonians for Health Security

One of the conclusions to the New Strength and Unity Program campaign of last year was that SEIU Local 503, OPEU members wanted to take on the bigger issues that had been beyond our reach so far, such as healthcare reform and protection of quality public services.

Making healthcare security a winning issue is one of our principal political goals this year.

The quality public services component of this program is being fought out in the two (or more) special sessions of the Oregon Legislature, as this issue of *The Oregon Public Employee* is going to press. Tax reform to support quality public services may also be partially addressed by the special session if lawmakers put a cigarette tax on the ballot.

The Service Employees International Union, nationally, is trying to put healthcare reform back on the national agenda. Three states have been targeted to lead this movement, including Oregon.

The health security campaign is being funded with \$1.2 million — half from SEIU International and half from SEIU Local 503, OPEU. This is the first campaign of the New Strength and Unity Program approved by Local 503 members last summer. When we voted YES last July, we voted to invest in our future, to strengthen our Union, to protect our health care benefits, to improve the image of public employees and to ensure adequate funding for our jobs and benefits and the services we provide.

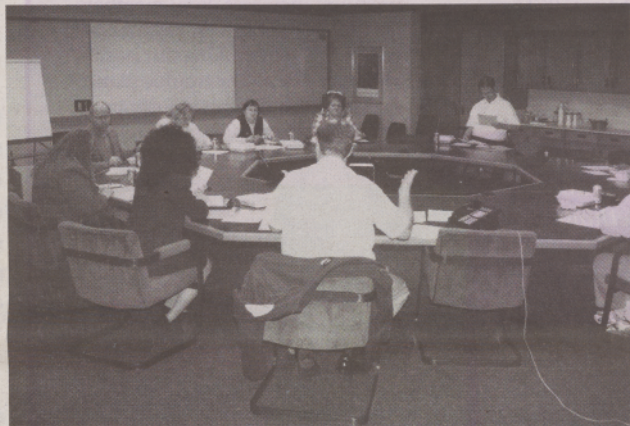
The campaign is being managed by **Arthur Towers**, the Executive Director of the Oregon State Council of Service Employees. Towers managed the successful campaign for homecare workers and quality homecare in 2000, Ballot Measure 99.

"Oregon was selected for the health security campaign," Towers said, "because Local 503 has demonstrated that it can move a good program. 503 has produced over the years; it's the backbone of the health security campaign in Oregon."

"Along with our reputation for taking on big issues and winning" said SEIU Local 503, OPEU President **Kathie Best**, "Local 503 designed a winning campaign that attracted the attention of the International. New Strength

and Unity is about winning big campaigns and our healthcare campaign is a huge fight."

We're taking these steps over the next several months leading up to the May 21 Oregon Primary Election in the campaign for health security . . .



SEIU Local 503, OPEU's New Strength and Unity Plan Healthcare Committee leading the campaign.

◆ **Building a Coalition.** We are working with other groups to educate the public about the need for quality health security and to hold candidates accountable.

◆ **Working to get candidates involved in the health security platform.** SEIU Local 503, OPEU questions candidates and organizes politically on this and a wide variety of issues that reflect the concerns and interests of our members. Quality public services, PERS, tax reform, and union rights are among the questions we consider before

we make an endorsement. But only by working for endorsed candidates and with high participation by our members in the May Primary, will we be able to move the health security agenda. Six candidates are running for Governor of Oregon. Ted Kulongoski, endorsed by the Oregon Council of Service Employees, is a

strong supporter of health security for all.

◆ **Learning the Health Security platform and making sure you are registered to**

vote; ◆ **Participating in the Union's census;** ◆ **Contributing to CAPE.**

Register to vote for endorsed legislative candidates in your area. You have until April 30 to register to vote. Mail-in registration cards are available at a variety of public places, including SEIU Local 503, OPEU offices.

Agree to do some of the activities necessary for the health security campaign to succeed, such as participating in phone banks and talking with coworkers and family members about the importance of this issue.

Help elect pro-affordable healthcare candidates to office. Political action by working families in Maine was responsible for a cap on prescription drug prices. We should support those candidates who support our fight for quality, affordable, secure health care.

The SEIU Local 503, OPEU's New Strength and Unity Healthcare Committee is chaired by 503 President **Best** and its members are **Lynda Clure, Michael Simpson, Rosanne Richard, Ann Montague, Alan Youse, Betty Lucht, Jeannette Blankenship, Bruce Nobles, Dave Grenbemer, David Roght, Jeri Ruatta and Barney Gorter. Leslie Frane, Rich Peppers and Karla Spence** from staff join the committee, as well as Towers from the Oregon Council of Service Employees.

No other union is as front and center tackling

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the healthcare crisis as Local 503 in Oregon and SEIU across the country. The International has designed a campaign to run over five years to expand health security to as many Americans as possible. As a target state for 2002; Oregon is the first recipient of New Strength and Unity money in the country. ●