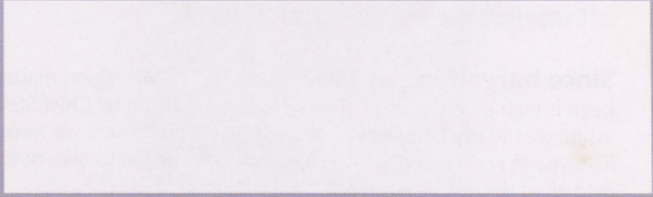


Oct 2004

The 503 VOICE

Vision to Action!

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Ballots are due 8 pm Tuesday, November 2.

Mailed or hand-delivered ballots must arrive at a drop site or County Elections office by 8 pm Tuesday, November 2nd. To find your County's drop sites & Elections Office information go to:

<http://www.oregonvotes.org/drop.htm>

Contract Campaign 2005 Begins!

by Leslie Frane, Executive Director, SEIU Local 503, OPEU

Ninety percent of our members will be bargaining new contracts in 2005. Over the past few months, SEIU Local 503 members who work for the state, in both the DAS and OUS bargaining units, and SEIU homecare workers have begun planning for the tough contract fights ahead of us.

DAS and OUS:

State workers have held two bargaining conferences so far. At the first, we adopted the theme "Refuse to Choose" to highlight our determination both to win raises and to protect our health insurance. DAS members elected their bargaining team members: Team chair Greg Ledbetter (DCBS), Anne Webb (Revenue), Phil Newton (DHS), Rochelle Begin (Employment), Randy Davis (Oregon State Hospital), George Goodman (OYA), Cory McIntosh (DMV), and Rod Stein (ODFW).

At the second bargaining conference, we analyzed the results of our contract surveys. Winning back our steps was the top priority on the wage front. However, bargaining delegates recognized that all workers are struggling to keep up with increases in their families' expenses. In the words of Frank Ryals, a bargaining delegate from Employment, "The important things that everyone needs are costing a lot more these days, so all state workers need a cost-of-living increase - and the step increases they were promised when they were hired. In order for our contract to be acceptable, we need both."

When it comes to health care, members are equally determined to protect fully-paid family health insurance premiums and to avoid increases in out-of-pocket costs.

OUS/DAS Integration: A central table for a stronger voice

For ten years, we have been trying to re-unite DAS and OUS bargaining, since we have more power together than separately. Now, for the first time since the legislature spun off the higher education system from the DAS unit in 1995, we may have an opportunity to bargain wages and benefits for both groups at a central table. Bargaining delegates are committed to achieve this goal.

OUS also elected a strong bargaining team, composed of Team chair Maggie Neel (OSU), Star Holmberg (U of O), Sophia Smolen (SOU), Michael O'Connor (EOU), Keith Carlton (WOU), Merrill Frink (OIT), and Jennie Rowland (OSU).

Homecare:

The bargaining conference for homecare workers will take place on November 13. To prepare, homecare workers are meeting throughout the state to elect regional bargaining team representatives and to discuss ideas for contract proposals. Improving employees' health insurance, winning family coverage, and protecting our hard-won Workers' Compensation benefits are key issues. As always, homecare workers

also strive to improve conditions for their clients as well. According to bargaining team member Erin McIntosh, "Training will be crucial this time, because if we get better training, we are able to deliver higher quality care to our clients."

The Challenge:

State economists are predicting another big budget deficit for 2005. Winning good contracts will not be easy. We are putting together regional strategy groups to help plan the campaign to put pressure on the state. The strategy groups' first challenge will be to plan worksite-based activities to support our DAS bargaining team on December 6, the first day of face-to-face negotiations with the state.

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CRISIS AT THE PARRY CENTER: Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner, and Representatives Jeff Merkley and Diane Rosenbaum joined members at a press conference this month to bring attention to a crisis in children's care at The Parry Center, run by Trillium Family Services. Trillium is refusing to address the issue of high staff turnover and is insisting on a three-year wage freeze.