

DMV members win victory for examiners testing uninsured drivers

by Sonya Reichwein, President, DMV Local 735

Since bargaining in 1997, we have been bringing up the issue of drive test insurance. Many DMV workers have been involved in accidents on drive tests. SAIF paid all of the drive examiner's medical bills and for lost wages. But workers hurt in drive tests without auto insurance could not easily get payment for pain and suffering and future wages. Management's "solution" to testing drivers without proof of insurance was a white lie known as the "Drive Test Insurance Certification Form." Applicants who usually did not own the car and were often only 16, provided self-certification of their insurance. Management admitted that about 13% of these forms were lies. They expected us to take a great personal risk by testing these drivers. They were instructing us to enable people to break the law by driving without insurance.

DMV region manager contacted the Regional Chief Steward, Laura Zeilinga, to find out if we were serious. Management began to take notice.

We have a plan and we persevere

On Wednesday, June 9, management contacted a safety officer at ODOT in compliance with our contract. They knew we were serious. The safety officer determined that DMV's policy did not constitute a physical threat or hazard. We expected this, but we did not give up.

Management agreed to collect data at several field offices and check out the validity of the self-certification form. We encouraged members to make complaints to ODOT's internal ethics office and I wrote a letter to the head of DMV field services explaining that it was unethical for them to require employees to knowingly enable customers to break the law. He did not respond to several letters of protest from me. Last month I forwarded my letter to the Deputy Director of DMV to express concern at such a blatant disregard of employee issues. She responded that they would have a response at the October Labor/Management meeting.



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We planned to escalate the issue by having employees circulate petitions among customers during lunch hours. We hadn't decided whether we wanted to present these to management or the Governor or both, but we were excited about organizing around the issue.

Victory for DMV members

At the October 7 Labor/Management meeting management shared the results of their study of drive test insurance. They determined that 91% of drive test certification forms were accurate, with a 12% margin of error. They also met with insurance industry representatives about what would be the most accurate way to determine insurance coverage. They announced that they were rewriting the policies and that sometime in November or December DMV would no longer accept self-certification forms.

This issue is very important to our members who conduct drive tests. It is a victory - after seven years of discussion, we took action and we won!

Members throughout Oregon are "Purpling Up" and sending a message of solidarity

As we enter contract negotiations for state workers, many worksites are already gearing up for the campaign and sending a strong message to management and the Governor that we are united for a fair contract.

"The Pendleton Department of Justice (DOJ) office is full-blown purple all the time," says Denise Bailey, Child Support Case Manager.

Every Wednesday 100% of the members in this worksite wear purple. Every cubicle is purple with banners and fresh balloons. To show solidarity they've even decorated a large plant in the office with SEIU items like whistles and ribbons. Members in this office have made personal commitments to their co-workers who are single mothers that if a strike is necessary, they'll be there to support them. There are also jars on their desks where members collect strike fund contributions.

The DHS offices in Coos Bay-North Bend are having fun with their efforts to "purple up" by making it competitive. The building that gets the most purple people each Wednesday wins a certificate. Yvonne Smith and the members in Coos Bay-North Bend are literally "in this to win!"

Barbara Casey's DHS office in Portland has adopted the theme "we're ready, Teddy" to let Governor Ted Kulongoski know we're preparing for a fight if necessary. Teddy bears with the slogan are on display in their worksite along with other purple items.

Members at Employment's Central Office are donning T-shirts and displaying union pennants and flags in their cubicles. Shelley Zander, Revenue Agent with Employment says, "People are much more involved in this contract

campaign than before. We're hoping that standing up for a fair contract now will prevent the need to walk out later!"

Medford's DMV office has accomplished something that's never been done before. Their action was recently featured on the seiu503.org website. For the first time, their entire office is wearing purple! Members at the Self Sufficiency office in Medford are displaying purple balloons in every cubicle and wearing their purple shirts.

Solidarity is the strongest weapon we have as a union - and it's especially important when we are bargaining our contracts. We show our strength and unity by wearing purple or "purpling up" on designated days and decorating our work areas with purple SEIU materials.



Teddy bears carry the message "We're ready, Teddy!" to Governor Kulongoski from DHS members in Portland.

How creative can your office or local get? Let us know by e-mailing your stories and pictures to szl@opeuseiu.org



Members in Employment are "purpling up" to send a strong message about our determination in this round of contract negotiations.

Statewide Office Election Results

SEIU Local 503, OPEU's newly elected statewide officers are:

- Executive Director: Leslie Frane
- President: Joe DiNicola
- Vice-President: Nancy Padilla
- Treasurer: Linda Burgin

Thanks to all members who voted and all candidates who put their names forward to serve our members as Statewide Officers.

Our voices are heard at Lobby Days - Sign up for 2005

"Lobby Day was a very interesting and fun experience," said Judy Cooper from DHS, Hillsboro. "It was very well organized and we got great background information from the political team. We spoke to legislators who were both supportive and not - but the dialogue was always interesting. I would do this again and would absolutely recommend Lobby Day to other members."

Judy Cooper is one of the more than 150 members from across Oregon who participated in SEIU Local 503's 2003 member lobby program.

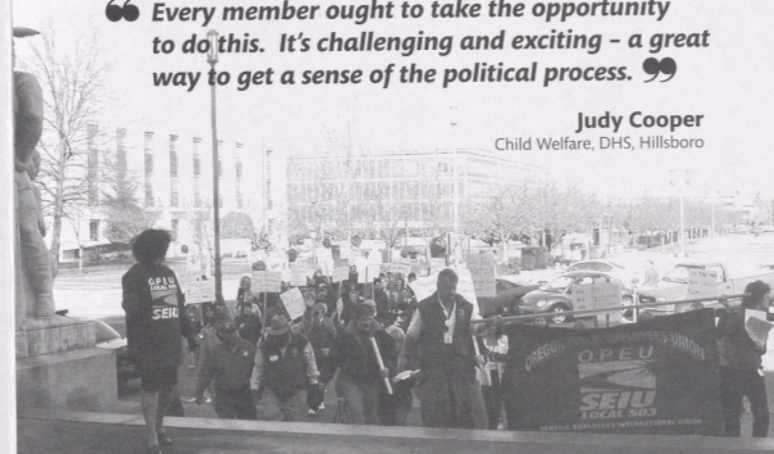
"The 2003 program was a great kickoff, but we hope to make the program even stronger this year," said political director Arthur Towers. "This is a chance for workers to really make their voices heard."

Legislators do not often hear from workers who deliver services on the front line. Lobby Day is an opportunity for members to share their personal experiences on the job, build relationships with legislators, and make a difference in our fight for fair contracts.

The 2005 legislative session begins on January 10, 2005. If you are interested in being part of the member lobby day program, contact Arthur Towers at 503-581-1505, ext 151.

Every member ought to take the opportunity to do this. It's challenging and exciting - a great way to get a sense of the political process.

Judy Cooper
Child Welfare, DHS, Hillsboro



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