

July 2005

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# The 503 VOICE

## Vision to Action!

VERNA'S

SEIU Local 503, OPEU  
PO Box 12159, Salem, OR 97309-0159

### Members win fairness on DAS/OUS contract

## We stood united and won for all

by Joe DiNicola, President SEIU Local 503, OPEU

Remember December? Six months ago, the Governor told us that all state employees would begin paying out-of-pocket for their monthly health insurance premiums. He didn't talk about the increased medical costs that have been shifted to workers every year in the form of higher co-pays. He didn't talk about the increasing costs of prescription drugs. He certainly did not mention the wage and step freeze that we have endured for the last two years. Instead, the Governor drew a line in the sand.

The State and OUS followed up with their initial contract proposals. Sure enough, they called for small raises in both years of the contract, only to be offset by hefty out-of-pocket costs for insurance. Those proposals amounted to a pay cut for almost every member.

We responded with a very clear message. We filled the halls of the Capitol and demanded an end to health care cost-shifting. We took to the streets for health care action days in March. We turned out for informational pickets in all corners of the state in April. On May 21, we filled the streets of Salem with purple and brought 5,000 members to the Capitol mall in our March for Fairness.

We ALL started phoning Ted. On June 30th we took to the streets again—over 400 members rocked the Capitol rotunda and the front

page told the news — the big stack of petitions said we expected a real raise, not a raw deal.

What was the result? We held the line at the DAS / OUS bargaining table on health care premiums, because there will be no out-of-pocket expense AND we can expect cost-of-living raises in both years of our next contract. Plus every worker in every job classification can now plan on a new ninth step.

We won a fair contract with dignity and respect for every one of our co-workers. We protected everyone's health care; our least paid workers will see a living wage minimum; and the freeze will be thawed. Everyone who sacrificed when times were tough will get three steps during the next two years.

I would like to thank the bargaining team members for their dedication and tenacity: Greg Ledbetter (DCBS), Rod Stein (ODFW), Leslie Frane (SEIU Local 503 Executive Director), Rochelle Begin, (Employment), Star Holmberg (UofO), Cory McIntosh (DMV), Donna Glather (SEIU Local 503 Co-chief bargainer), Maggie Neel (OSU), Phil Newton (DHS), George Goodman (OYA), Randy Davis (OSH), and Anne Webb (Revenue).

And I would especially like to thank you — and all our fellow members for standing together for fairness. You made it possible to win a fair contract for all of us.



More than 400 members flooded into the Capitol rotunda at noon on June 30 to deliver United for Fairness petitions to the Governor. People heard us from the basement to the fourth floor.

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July 7, 4:45 a.m.

## We win!

We have reached a tentative agreement and have successfully "Refused to Choose." We have maintained our health care benefits **and** won raises. Additionally, we won on all three of our fairness issues.

### Here's how we won fairness:

- Protected health care for all employees, including part-timers
- Steps reinstated July 1, 2005
- 2% cost-of-living increases on July 1, 2005 and Dec. 1, 2006
- \$50 floor so workers who earn less than \$30,000 per year get the floor instead of 2%
- Ninth step added to scale
- Workers who lost two steps will get one additional step in the second year of this contract
- One more personal day
- Selective salary increases for workers in 33 classifications

“From the first day of bargaining we said we needed progress on both wages and health care. We met that goal, and we are proud to recommend this tentative agreement to our members for ratification.”

Greg Ledbetter

SEIU Bargaining Team Chair and a consumer advocate at Department of Consumer and Business Services.