

## Using Union Power to Make a Difference in Salem

The outlook was uncertain. In the weeks before the 2012 legislative session, our members and the Oregonians we serve had reason for deep concern. Once again we heard calls for deeper cuts to services in order to close a revenue shortfall topping \$306 million.

The budget for seniors and people with disabilities was shy more than \$50 million and the state proposed eliminating healthcare for half our homecare providers who now receive it. But we fought back big-time.

We used the political process. SEIU 503 members including Homecare Worker Kit Good (Salem) weighed in with compelling testimony at legislative hearings, offering proactive solutions.

We published a new edition of the "Moving Oregon Forward" report and pressed for implementing our recommendations showing alternatives to cutting jobs and services. The first sign that all this work was paying off came when legislative leaders proposed a budget framework that included our ideas for balancing the budget without sacrificing many jobs.

But we needed people power to make these proposals stick, and our members delivered. We wrote, phoned and picketed the Governor and even staged a sit-in at his Salem office, urging fair treatment for care providers and other frontline workers. We joined forces with AARP and the Oregon Health Care Association to buy billboards, radio spots and newspaper ads, and lobbied jointly for long-term care for seniors and people with physical disabilities.

And we turned out en masse with our allies and flooded the Capitol

rotunda for the Day of Action on February 20—perfectly timed to coincide with final budget negotiations. Thousands rallied in support of services and schools, in an event jointly sponsored by SEIU 503, Oregon Education Association and other allies.

### *What's next?*

#### **Build a Strong, Pro-Worker Majority in the House and Senate**

We must continue to build political power, especially in the legislature. This fall the entire House and half the Senate is up for re-election. The May primaries and November general election will determine how well working families do in 2013 and the years to come. Our chance to negotiate good contracts depends on the outcome of these elections. It is critical that we have legislators in office with the backbone to take on big business and pass long term revenue solutions. Please sign up for CAPE, and volunteer to help worker-friendly candidates get elected.

#### **Prepare for 2013 Contract Negotiations**

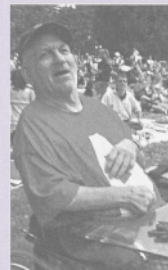
We must begin preparations for next year's contract negotiations now. You help build the power of your union when you lead as a local union officer or a CAT (Communication Action Team) Leader. You help build the power of your union when you stand together with other members to deal with injustices. You help build the power of your union when you stay informed and speak out about what's right. The day-to-day work we do now will help lay the groundwork for the tough contract fight we will face in 2013. And we must be ready to demand the respect we deserve.

## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March was "Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month," and the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities held their annual celebration and awards ceremony in the state capitol building on March 28. Governor John Kitzhaber took part in the celebration and read a proclamation designating the observance.

This year's theme was to celebrate self-advocacy and the self-advocates in Oregon. Self-advocates have become a force in Oregon and throughout the world with their theme of "Nothing about us without us." Oregon self-advocates have worked in the legislature, served on committees and workgroups and are valued members of the DD Coalition, DD Council, and numerous boards and commissions throughout the state.

At the event, the council introduced its annual awareness poster. State Representative Sara Gelser and her son Sam helped to unveil the 2012 OCDD poster promoting and highlighting self-advocacy. The poster theme this year was "I have a voice!"



Laddie Read

DD Champions included self-advocate Laddie Read and Representative Vicki Berger, who received awards for their advocacy and long-time commitment to the DD community. Their awards read, "Your advocacy has had a lasting, positive effect on the quality of life of Oregonians with developmental disabilities and their families."