

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

Working people deserve bold action

The stories have become so commonplace they often go unnoticed.

We know through newspapers, television and social media that we are in a crisis. We see it on the masked faces of children in school, unsure that another way of life is possible. We see it in full emergency rooms, beds rolled into hallways and ambulances told to go somewhere else.



GRAHAM TRAINOR

We see it in the shadows beneath the eyes of workers toiling long hours for supremely profitable corporations, no longer given thanks or called heroes for carrying a heavy load during what we used to call unprecedented

times. The numbing effect of so much change, transition and trauma takes a collective toll on us all.

Working people from every background and in every sector of our economy are carrying us through this moment in time, and they deserve to be honored and respected every day and especially on Labor Day. We all need to take action to honor them.

I have found so much inspiration in the bravery of workers in northeast Portland at Nabisco who commanded respect by walking out of the factory in early August onto a picket line. These workers were forced on strike, over simply holding the line for fairness, respect and safety in their workplace after years of watching their work get sent out of the country in search of cheaper and more dangerous labor. And they did so after over a year of working grueling shifts in pandemic conditions so that families across the country could enjoy snacks we have come to expect as a staple on grocery shelves, all while Nabisco and its parent company, Mondelez, made record profits.

Their bravery is commendable, and their fight for economic equality is part of the disappearing analysis of the pandemic: The compensation of a CEO is 350 times higher than that of the average worker.

Portland's Nabisco strike set off a wave of activism, with the majority of Nabisco facilities in the United States joining the picket line. I believe it will inspire more workers to decide "enough is enough" and fight for their rights at work as well, and hope this



Associated Press

Unions organize for better pay, benefits and working conditions.

Labor Day is a time of inspiration for working people. Unfortunately for many workers, the ability to experience the life changing, transformative power of joining a union is hard to come by, despite half of nonunion workers being ready to join together in one for better pay, benefits and working conditions.

Every day, I am deeply inspired by and grateful for the continued strength and sacrifice of health care workers. As we know, the surge of COVID-19 has pushed Oregon's hospitals to a crisis point. With less hospital beds per capita than most other states, we were not ready for the initial COVID-19 outbreak and certainly not prepared for the delta variant, which has spread rap-

idly among the unvaccinated.

The headlines have been full of health care workers and leaders describing unfathomable circumstances to accommodate new patients, and it's critical that every day — but particularly Labor Day — we all reflect on what that means for frontline workers and their families.

The bold changes needed for our communities, state and country must be tackled by each and every one of us. From the desperately needed labor law reforms found in the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, to ensuring our roads, bridges and the care economy are funded through both infrastructure packages, to finally making sure

democracy is both upheld and executed through voting rights and filibuster reform — these are all pieces to the puzzle of building a stronger Oregon and country.

Oregon workers are lucky to have a number of champions in our congressional delegation and we are closely watching those members who may not support each of these critical policies. Because these are the kinds of bold changes workers expect, especially this Labor Day.

Graham Trainor is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, the statewide federation of labor unions. This guest column was originally published in the Portland Tribune.

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GUEST COLUMN

The injustice of forced union dues

America's working men and women have faced unprecedented challenges over the course of the pandemic, and on Labor Day, we shouldn't only be remembering their dedication but redoubling our efforts to protect their individual rights in the workplace.

That means there is work to do in Oregon, because it is one of the 23 states lacking a "right-to-work" law. In your state, union officials are granted the power to legally threaten a worker to pay up or else be fired. By imposing a monopoly bargaining contract, all employees in a unionized workplace, even those who reject union membership, can be forced to pay union fees as a condition of employment.

While the landmark 2018 U.S. Supreme Court Janus v. AFSCME decision now protects all public sector workers from compelled union payments, private sector workers in Oregon and other forced-unionism states can still be required to fund union officials' activities, even if they bitterly oppose the union's so-called "representation."

The vast majority of Americans recognize that this is just plain wrong. From year to year polls consistently show that many Americans reject the idea that someone should be forced to bankroll unwanted

A WEALTH OF DATA SUPPORTS THE IDEA THAT RIGHT-TO-WORK WORKS FOR BOTH EMPLOYEES AND BUSINESSES, BUT THE PROTECTIONS EXIST FIRST AND FOREMOST TO SAFEGUARD EACH INDIVIDUAL WORKER'S RIGHT TO DECIDE FREELY WHETHER UNION OFFICIALS DESERVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

union boss activities just to keep his or her job.

In addition to falling short in protecting workers' rights, forced-unionism states fell painfully behind their right-to-work counterparts in recovering from the economic disruption of COVID-19.

According to U.S. Department of Labor stats from July, from April 2020 to last April, right-to-work states posted a recovery in manufacturing payroll jobs roughly 60% stronger by percentage than the one forced-unionism states had during the same time period.

Sluggish job growth in forced-unionism states was not limited to just the pandemic recovery. A National Institute for Labor Relations Research analysis points out that, from 2020 back to 2010, employment in states lacking right-to-work protections increased by only 2.4%, palling in comparison to right-to-work states' 11% jump in the same decade.

It's no surprise, then, that right-to-work states passed the milestone just last

year of now playing host to the majority of employed people in the United States, according to the Department of Labor's household survey. And people don't just flock to right-to-work states for the jobs: The NLRB analysis points out that, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the mean after-tax household income in right-to-work states is about \$4,300 higher than the average for households in forced-unionism states, after adjusting for cost of living.

Business experts also regularly point out that right-to-work plays a major role when a company is deciding where to expand an existing plant or facility or where to create a new one. In the manufacturing notes, payroll employment in right-to-work states grew by 9.1% while falling by 0.2% in forced-unionism states, during 2010 to 2020.

A wealth of data supports the idea that right-to-work works for both employees and businesses, but the protections exist



Associated Press

Oregon is among 23 states that do not have so-called 'right-to-work' laws.

first and foremost to safeguard each individual worker's right to decide freely whether union officials deserve financial support.

And of course, right-to-work does nothing to stop workers from affiliating with a union if they choose to voluntarily. In fact, right-to-work presses union bosses to become more accountable, as they know that they can't depend on government-granted power to keep employees money-rolling into their coffers, and that they must instead earn that support by being responsive to their needs.

The working men and women of Oregon and America as a whole deserve this kind of protection. So this Labor Day, consider the benefits of right-to-work and demand your elected officials embrace worker freedom and economic opportunity.

Mark Mix is president of the National Right to Work Committee and National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.