



LOCAL 7901 The Grapevine

January 2010

Serving Oregon & Southwest Washington—Serving You!

January 2010

Communications Workers of America Local 7901

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CALENDAR

January

16th—Linda Rasmussen/
Fundraiser 6:30 p.m.

21st—Executive Board
6:30 p.m.
2950 SE Stark St., Ste. 100

28th—Membership Mtg
7:00 p.m.
6401 SE Foster Rd

February

18th—Executive Board
6:30 p.m.
2950 SE Stark St., Ste. 100

25th—Membership Mtg
7:00 p.m.
6401 SE Foster Rd.

Oregon CWA Staff representative Linda M. Rasmussen made the decision to retire on January 5, 2010. She had a long and active participation with CWA in the labor movement. She ran for 2nd VP of the Oregon State AFL-CIO in 1974 and won. She was a leader in Oregon's CLUW chapter. She began working for Pacific Northwest Bell in 1964. In 1982, she was elected President of Local 7901 in Portland. After two terms as President, she became a staff representative and worked first in Tukwila, WA, the District office in Denver, and then here in Portland at the area office. She has also served as our Oregon State AFL-CIO Executive Board member, and won many awards for the most consistent phone-banker and volunteer for all the major elections. Please join us in honoring her.

Saturday, January 16, 2010

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

NE Community Center

1630 NE 38th Ave. (between Sandy and Broadway) in Portland, OR

**In lieu of gifts,
donations for the Yes on 66/67 campaign will happily be accepted!**



DEX

Retirees were sent letters in December to inform them of the bankruptcy court judge's decision on retiree health care. Pre-October 2009 retirees have their choice and must make that choice by the end of January/beginning of February deadline (outlined in this letter.) Retirees can have the health care phase out plan negotiated by CWA, which is paying 1/2 the premiums in 2010, and 3/4 premiums in 2011, then forever giving up DEX-provided health care. The other choice is to be able to keep health benefits through COBRA "forever." COBRA payments are 100% of the premiums plus a 1 or 2% administrative fee. They do not have the choice of a lower-premium, high-deductible plan. In other news, your CWA stewards are working hard to represent you. Please talk to them if you feel that you are unfairly being disciplined or talked-to. It is imperative that you have an Area Vice President to represent you on the CWA Local 7901 Executive Board. Together, we have the power to make this place a good place to work again. United we Stand!

QWEST

Retirees are once again the victims of Qwest's cost-cutting measures. All post-1991 retirees will now be denied even the measly \$10,000 in death benefits. No more death benefits. Unfortunately, because the National Labor Relations Act declares that retirees are not a mandatory subject of bargaining, Qwest can refuse to negotiate with CWA over this change. If you are not outraged, you are not paying attention. It was sad to see the departure of so many techs with the last zip vspp. How are the workers left behind to keep up with the work? The departure of most of the air crew seems to be an omen of the future of Qwest. Are you using your Pathways benefits? Even now, you could be online at CWA-NETT (www.cwanett.org) getting an associate's degree, or laying the foundation for a new career. This is a bargained-for benefit that will go away without use!!

SCHOLARSHIP

Union Plus, CWA, and the Newspaper Guild all have scholarship deadlines coming up. The Union Plus scholarship deadline is January 30, 2010 at: www.unionplus.org/college-education-financing/union-plus-scholarship. Local 7901 members have won many Joseph Beirne scholarships. The deadline is March 30, 2010, at: www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne. The Newspaper Guild, a part of CWA, has a specific scholarship for journalism majors. The deadline is January 29, and information is at: <http://www.newsguild.org/index.php?ID=912>.

AVAYA

With the contracts fresh off the press, management is again looking at a lay-off. This is not because they can't sell the Avaya products and services. It is because they want third-party, non-union, substandard workers to do the work. It's an insult to those who actually built the brand from a no-name to the one that is recognized today.

AT&T MOBILITY

RETAIL: Did you have an opportunity to schedule your 2010 vacation in November or December? It is required in the contract, regardless of "My Schedule." (Whose schedule?) If your store did not pass around a vacation list for the whole year of 2010 already, please call Jeanette Turner at the Local and let us know. This is an oversight that needs to be addressed. You do not want to lose any of your entitlement time. Vacation is a must for retail sales people! You need time to relax from the pressure. If management calls you in for a meeting, and it turns into a disciplinary meeting, you have a right to stop the meeting and request a steward. The steward has your back, and will take notes so that you can remember what was said.

CALL CENTER: A grievance meeting for a violation of "Weingarten rights" was denied. For those who do not remember, Weingarten rights are your right to a shop steward in a meeting with a manager or managers where you reasonably believe that discipline, or a threat of discipline will take place. Grievance meetings are where both the company and the union mutually discuss problems. We believe that management violated our representational rights under the National Labor Relations Act (a Federal law.) While we would be reluctant to bring formal public charges, as is our right, we do have the right to grieve this issue and get a solution or settlement from AT&T in writing.

Reps are stating there are problems with their FMLA claims. Please gather all your information about the claim, including correspondence with Lynne Wheldon. Please have your manager print the emails or have them email you permission to send them home to avoid any code of business conduct charges. You have 30 days to appeal from the date they denied your claim. Then go to a steward to decide if we will grieve it. Also, once intermittent FMLA is approved, you must report your FMLA absence within 2 business days to the FMLA line. In the past, there was not such a strict deadline, but now there is. There are long hold times on the report line. Please do not give up because the law is behind the Company in terms of their process for claiming intermittent leave.

ECI

Once again, management has called a lay-off. It was unnecessary, and the least senior person was not laid off. It appears that the contract is only valuable to management when they need to prove that they have a Union-represented work force for specific building projects. When they are pushed to honor the contract, they balk.

HOME BUYER TAX CREDIT

Union Members, Retiree's and Families! Check out the 2009 Extended Home Buyer Tax Credit that Expires on April 30, 2010. 1st Time Buyer Credit=\$8000/Seller Credit=\$6500. Ask me about REFERRALS! Call Grady for Details at 503.495.4932.

Gradine 'Grady' Storms

RE/MAX equity group, inc

Member of Communications Workers of America

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LEGISLATIVE

Last month the local voted to endorse the Paid Family Leave Act when it is brought before the state legislator in the next full term. The act will enable people to take time off, up to six weeks, to care for a sick family member or for the birth of a child and receive a small stipend if their employer does not have a paid leave policy. The stipend would be \$300 a week and is funded by a tax contribution of 2 cents an hour.

We must continue to tell our Federal officials to not tax our health benefits and to institute some type of cost controls into the final bill. We should also realize that we would not be in the disturbing position with this health care bill if we had a better campaign finance system. We need to curb corporate money influence so the people can be heard.

We will be starting our endorsement process for the May primary next month. If you would like to participate please email me at msturbois@comcast.net and I will include you in the process. Early this year, the Employee Free Choice Act is supposed to be introduced. It reportedly will have a new name and may not include card check in order to pass the Senate. We must make calls and write letters at the appropriate time. We need to grow and we need a level playing field and fairness in contract bargaining.

This brings us to measures 66 and 67. These must pass and send a message to big business and the well to do that have eluded their responsibilities during the Bush years. Workers have been paying their share continually and it is time others to pay their share. These measures are the start of tax fairness in Oregon. They are the first step. In Solidarity, Mark Sturbois

Here is what is at risk in just Multnomah County alone if Measures 66 and 67 don't pass:

- \$ **\$46.8 million** in K-12 school funding for Multnomah County's 91,092 students — on average, **\$431.44 per student**.
- \$ Portland State University could lose **\$7.08 million**, resulting in higher tuition, staff and faculty layoffs, and program reductions.
- \$ Oregon Health & Sciences University could lose **\$7.9 million**, which will force the university to increase tuition at all of their schools, cut a wide array of programs including, nursing support, health care coordination for children with special needs.
- \$ Multnomah County's Community Colleges, including Portland Community College: They could be forced to **raise tuition 9%, cap enrollment, reduce days, and eliminate faculty positions** as a result of a 5% reduction in Community College State Funding.
- \$ The Columbia River Correctional Facility could be **cut or eliminated**. The facility can house up to 540 inmates and currently employs 132 people.
- \$ **Multnomah County Courts, which could close** one day a week.
- \$ A tax break for **39,807 unemployed people**, who will receive a tax refund on the first \$2,400 they received in unemployment benefits.

The Grapevine is distributed by your Mobilization Committee and other dedicated volunteers.
Editor: Donna Allen Thanks to all who contributed articles!

The Grapevine is published monthly by Local 7901 of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) for the dissemination of information relevant to the interests and welfare of its members. Views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Union, the Local, or the Editor.