

503 Retiree

The Newsletter of the SEIU Retirees Local 001

End Of The Legislative Session In Salem, Some Highs, Some Lows

Information from End of Session memo from Melissa Unger. Compiled by Barbara Casey

Clearly we did not win our big fight for game-changing revenue. It was a long shot when we started and we got within one vote in the Senate. We did see many different types of businesses publicly come forward to support increasing their own taxes and investing that money in services. We had 674 people attend budget town halls; we attended over 30 legislative hearings and built a coalition with over 22 allied groups recruiting people to many different events.

While we did not get revenue reform, we did prioritize the budget. The legislature closed the gap without draconian cuts or cutting benefits to pay for programs. There are cuts but they are more sustainable than a \$1.8B shortfall would indicate. The legislature did pass a provider tax to fund the shortfall in Health care. That tax (raising \$900 million) made sure that 300,000 Oregonians kept their insurance and many members who rely on OHP have a sustainable health plan.

A few fights we won on budget:

- Increasing the state worker salary pot from \$50 M to \$100 M and increasing care providers from 0 to \$10M
- Protected funding for nursing homes, which is directly tied to workers wages.
- Saving the Oregon Project Independence Program
- Increasing the allocation to Higher education by \$60 Million
- Increasing Child Welfare to \$30 M to fund staffing and foster parent enhancements sought by CW workers

Among sad losses:

- The home care live -in program will end in October, and there will be a reduction in support programs for people with intellectually or developmental delays.
- Increase in State University tuition and cuts in programs.

While budget and revenue were our top policy priority, we engaged, supported and opposed a lot of bills. Only one bill that SEIU opposed

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Greg Ledbetter
President

Letter from the President

It is hard to believe another Labor Day

has passed since our last newsletter. I blame it on how occupied we all have been since then with the November presidential election and its incredible consequences.

In spite of that we had successful outcomes in our statewide elections and legislative session. I know that many of our retirees spent hours on the phone and attending rallies, testifying to the legislature, helping with contract bargaining, calling Senators and Representatives to save health care for tens of millions. I want to thank everyone who has put in the hard work, thank you.

The fight and our resistance to the so clearly un-normal state of our country continues but I am not going to write about how public unions are almost certain to face major revenue challenges when the U.S.

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Steve Demarest

Retiree Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings! I know that many of you reading this are PERS beneficiaries and have an interest in the subject. A total of 40 proposals regarding PERS benefits were introduced in this year's legislative session. None passed, primarily because we were able to connect PERS "reform" to revenue reform and there was no revenue reform. Of particular note for retirees is a measure introduced in the Oregon

Senate at the end of session that included a package of drastic PERS changes. One of those would put the entire system at risk by arbitrarily lowering employer rates, which would likely result in underfunding. Every Senate Republican voted for the measure, and the minority leader said it was a starting point for discussions next time.

One significant PERS development that did occur was that the PERS Board again lowered the assumed earnings rate. Effective January 1, 2018, it will be 7.2 percent, down from 7.5. No doubt, there will be a wave of retirements before then by workers retiring under Money Match. Those Money Match waves are getting smaller as the number of eligible workers continues to shrink. Last year, 35 percent of PERS retirements were Money Match.

Despite the lack of revenue reform, and despite starting the legislative session with a \$1.8 billion deficit, the work of members, our political team, and bargaining teams has resulted in positive contract settlements. Two, for the state DAS unit and Higher Education, each are tentative agreements with steps, COLAs, and no increase in healthcare premiums.

A shout out to retiree Catherine Stearns, a former state employee who volunteered and served as secretary/note-taker for the Higher Ed bargaining team.

Thanks to Barbara Casey for the opportunity to write to you. I hope to do it again. Thank each of you for your devotion to our Union, to workers, their families, and our communities. Together, we have work ahead of us on revenue reform, housing, health care, and our viability as a union. I look forward to getting to do that work with you.

In Solidarity
Steven Demarest President SEIU 503

Did you STRIKE in '87?

By Ann Montague

Did you march in Salem in 1987 holding placards and signs and shouting "Hey State, Negotiate! Must We Strike? (editor's note, we named our newly acquired cats Oppie spelled OPEU and Striker) and then YOU DID! Then you were part of the infamous/glorious "Rolling Strike" so effective and so strategic that the state immediately outlawed it.

Let's Celebrate the 30th Anniversary of our Rolling Strike. There is heightened interest in remembering our historic strike—not only from the strikers but newer members and staff who do not know its history.

President Steven Demarest took our idea to the Board of Directors who approved of our moving forward with a celebration. His idea of having it **SATURDAY NOVEMBER 18** after the BOD meeting in Portland seems perfect. That meeting usually breaks at 4:00, so we are talking about an early evening affair.

Retirees from Portland are planning on figuring out the refreshments and do outreach. This is step 1 of the outreach: We want YOU there! Bring your stories and your pictures you might have.

If you are interested in giving input on the program or want to help in any way contact Ann Montague at 503-910-5988 or annmontague@comcast.net

*Some people try to turn back
their odometers but not me.
I want people to know why I
look this way. I've travelled
a long way and some of the
roads weren't paved.*

Sweden and Norway in July

By Linda DeLucia



Although Scandinavia was never one of my priority destinations, nevertheless when a friend of mine asked me to go with her to revisit an area where she had lived for two years, I decided to go. We saw the usual castles, forts and churches that

abound all over Europe, and which I typically go for because I like the old historic stuff, the small medieval towns, and the natural life around a country.

On this trip, I have to say that the areas and small towns in and around the Norwegian fjords, as well as the fjords themselves, were what I enjoyed the most. I never knew exactly what fjords were, but I learned that they were long, narrow inlets of the sea between high cliffs and mountains and they were formed by submerged glacial valleys. We took boat rides through some of them and they were awe-inspiring with huge cliffs on both sides and very few passageways through them. We found small towns tucked in the small places where it was possible to build them and wondered how the people there ever got through the freezing winters in such isolated spots, but they do. One of the captains pointed out some of the daredevil activities that go on there and they were the scariest I have ever heard.

We ate a lot of fish, all kinds of fish. Cod is a primary fish found around Norway and we tasted it cooked in various ways. At large open-air fish markets, fisherman would cook the fish in different ways and sell it directly to customers and tourists. We had our best meals at those fish markets and I found myself wishing we had more of this kind of thing in some of the larger places on the Oregon coast.

Instead of taking a tour, we booked with AirBNB (a first for me) and found that the accommodations were very nice and

we saved money by cooking some of our own meals. They were especially good for our longer stays around Stockholm and Oslo. The prices of everything were outrageous and it was good that we didn't find much to buy there outside of food, travel and admission prices to various places. What did get to us, were the long hours of daylight. I don't think it ever got really dark there. Dusk started at 10-10:30 pm and by 3:15 am the sun was coming up. Although we were told there were light-blocking shades in the AirBNB places, they turned out to be only regular shades. You have to use eye masks or get used to the lack of darkness (as we know it). Fortunately we got used to it and managed to sleep okay.

From a historical perspective, the most interesting aspect was of course the Vikings. We learned a lot about them, including the fact that they never wore horned helmets, only metal helmets. The horns, it turned out, were a Hollywood invention. I was so disappointed. There is only one intact Viking helmet ever found and it is in one of Oslo's historical museums. The Viking era only lasted about 350 years and ended about 1010 AD. Most Scandinavians were farmers just like everywhere else and the Vikings were just the few marauders who chose to go abroad and make conquests. It was amazing though how far they made it, even to Nova Scotia, centuries before any other Europeans.

I'd just like to point out one other thing that I wish I had known before booking the airfare for the trip. We went on Icelandair which offers the fastest and cheapest fares from Portland to Scandinavia. The flights make a short stop in Reykjavik and the airline offers a stay-over for up to seven days with no increase in airfare. You just get on the second leg of the flight when you're ready and pay no extra charges. You have to know this in advance however because once you book you cannot go back and request this benefit. Had we known, we would have taken advantage of it. I love those Iceland horses!

So for those of you considering a vacation in Scandinavia... god reise!

Retirees Attend LGBTQ Parade in Albany by Rosanne Richard

On Saturday, July 22, Albany held its first Pride March. While many cities across the country and around the world have held this event since 1970, it was a first for Albany. The march was a show of support for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Between 500 and 600 people participated and represented a diverse group which included union supporters and churches. The march was organized in part to protest the failure of the Albany city council to include the words “equity” and “diversity” to the language describing the mission of their Human Relations Commission.

SEIU members, including those from the Lavender Caucus, Civil and Human Rights Committee and the Retirees Local participated in the march. It was a beautiful day for the gathering and the size of the turn out was a hopeful sign for things to come. Karen Zimmermann and her wife Beth hosted participants for a picnic lunch at their Corvallis residence after the march.



PHOTO: Albany Democrat Herald

The “Brain” behind KSKQ



FROM LEFT: Wes Brain and Jason Houk

In the early KSKQ days—sometime in 2006, when recruitment for producers was hot and furious, Wes Brain showed up to an organizing meeting of KSKQ’s core group and laid out a concept for a daily radio show. Jason Houk spoke up, said he wanted to help and on Nov. 8, 2006 the Brain Labor Report started, a 7AM daily 1/2 hour long show hosted by Wes and engineered by Jason. It featured a mix of music and interviews that focused on the war on working people and the huge gap between the rich and poor in our society.

Since its inception, the show’s theme has remained the same. Why should we, the 99%ers, fight amongst ourselves, while the 1% just keep accumulating more and more wealth and power? The BLR has asked this question consistently and has aired many moving discussions about injustices here in Southern Oregon, across our country and all around the world.

The Brain Labor Report also recognizes that we have a waning working class culture. The sights and sounds of working people’s music, art and theater are extremely important and are highlighted on the show through interviews with local folks in the Rogue Valley and sometimes with famous people, too.

Wes challenges the points of view that divide us. “We don’t say middle class on the Brain Labor Report,” he

explains. “Because that language divides us. We are all workers, we are the working class. This is a much better way to describe us.”

The show ran with over 550 “live” productions airing until July 31, 2009, when it took a 2.5 year rest. On November 30, 2011, the Brain Labor Report returned to the air. Wes is still host and Jason still engineers although the show now airs just once a week for an hour at 9AM on Wednesdays. The format is still the same. Every week, they start with “War on the Workers”, the classic protest song by the hell-raising labor folk singer Anne Feeney. Then Wes and Jason continue their efforts to balance all the misinformation fed by a corporate media who are more interested in selling the news with their own reporting on the struggles of ordinary working people.



Besides producing the Brain Labor Report, Wes is a Community Organizer with Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice and has a history of political activism with his union the Service Employees International Union.

Tune in to KSKQ 89.5 FM every Wednesday at 9 AM to listen to the Brain Labor Report.

Our Retirees help sponsor this program and we are proud to call Wes a SEIU503 retiree.

Portland Resists!

By John Leppink



John Leppink

The Portland Retirees continue to be active attending the town halls of Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden and protesting the appearance of Paul Ryan at a Greg Walden fundraiser held at the Waverly Club in Portland. We love to talk and enjoy the fellowship of our retirees at the Village Inn

at Lloyd center the second Tuesday of the month 10:00am.

The Portland retirees hosted Sandy Polishuk, 350pdx Board Director, Assistant Treasurer, and Divest Team Coordinator as guest speaker. She talked about the 350's actions around the fossil fuel divestment movement. The Portland 350 group is looking for collation partners and assistance from volunteers in their efforts. We also suggested the SEIU503 Capital Stewardship Committee that monitors the Oregon Investment Council and advocates for a secure retirement for all Oregonians. Ken Penner and Barbara Casey are among the members and that committee meets usually the night before the OIC meets to prepare our testimony and review their agenda. Next meeting is Tuesday September 19th at 5:30 pm at Portland Headquarters.

Ms. Polishuk pointed us toward several sites for more information on the 350 movement. I would encourage you to visit the following sites: 350.org, 350pdx.org, gofossilfree.org, <http://climatejobs.labor4sustainability.org/pacific-northwest-report/>. If you are interested in signing up to have PERS divest from fossil fuels go to: <http://350pdx.nationbuilder.com/divestpers>.

Sandy said she would be interested in addressing the larger retirees group in the future if we were interested.

Breaking News, Special Reports... Yikes This Administration is Exhausting

By Barbara Casey

So Greg, our president, has taken up golf to relax when he is not resisting. What do you do to focus on self care? When stress gets to you and "Keep Calm and Carry On" doesn't quite do it.

Here are a few suggestions of mine:

- Listen to an album(okay... CD, iPod etc) that was your favorite in your youth start to finish. For me "Tapestry" by Carole King "Sweet Baby James" James Taylor among so many others.
- Buy yourself some flowers- Trader Joe's, a weekly habit, is great for seasonal bunches.
- Go to bed early with a good book- recently read and enjoyed "Born A Crime" Trevor Noah, "A Man Called Ove" Fredrick Blackman, "Notorious RBG" Inin Carmen/Shana Knizhnik and "Born to Run" Bruce Springsteen. I highly recommend them.
- Call a loved one and tell them you love them. They cross your mind so call them right now.
- De-clutter a bookcase, or just maybe...a basement.
- Have an All day PJ day- maybe once a week (I like Thursdays)
- Do karaoke, but do it completely sober! OR
- A new brewery opens or a new beer release happens every week say yes to happy hour.
- Have a No-Tech Day or at least an evening.
- Get outside and leisurely walk in nature. (Well, okay, drive through nature parks)
- Practice Kindness. Being generous and giving of yourself has some very powerful benefits. Helping others in meaningful ways generally results in a happier, healthier, resilient and longer life for the giver. Small acts of kindness decrease the effects of stress.

Volunteering may even lower blood pressure. Studies have shown, 200 volunteer hours a year, being physically active and altruistic led to this difference. So show up and Step up!

Kindness may be good for the heart. Emotional warmth associated with kindness may lead to the release of oxytocin the "love hormone" reducing free radicals and inflammation—two culprits that may play a part in heart disease. So yes...all you need is love.

End Of The Legislative Session

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passed into law, cost containment, which is an impressive record. Some bills that we thought were key, did not make it through, specifically Housing, it passed the house but died in the Senate.

Our president, Steven Demarest, discussed PERS with you in another article, and our Keep Oregon Working was a great campaign to support our retirement security. Fair Shot—that so many of the retirees worked on had 3 out of 5 successes. We won on Cover All Kids, Ending Profiling and Reproductive Health Equity. Our loss on Housing and Paid Family Leave is still heartbreaking. We led on these but could not get the legislature to get it done.

A significant transportation package passed—infrastructure and jobs. We also worked on 2 bills that passed for significant highway worker safety.

There were a variety of immigration bills that passed—great since those communities are under so much stress from national policies. Cover All Kids passed and so did bill that sets up rules about what information can be shared from agencies to federal government.

As stated we did not do this on our own coalitions include: Labor Lobby, Campaign for Seniors and People with Disabilities, Fair Shot, One Oregon, Housing Coalition, Revenue Coalition, A Better Oregon, Health Care Allies and many others.

Thank you to our very capable political department led by Melissa Unger and her team including our own Len Norwitz.

We appreciate that work of the many retiree volunteers—lobbying, phone banking, testifying and supporting our political program. I have always been proud of CAPE and urge all retirees to contribute and to be a part of the endorsement process when candidates are interviewed on where they stand and yes I still believe, if you are not at the table you are probably on the menu.

Letter From The President

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Supreme Court rules in one of several pending cases, nor how the National Labor Relations Board has been turned into a voice for corporations and management, nor how Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are under vicious attacks, nor how voter suppression threatens our democracy, no. I go a bit nuts from it all.

It is important to also take care of ourselves and our friends, family, brothers and sisters. I myself have been remiss. However, I am going to confess to a major fault: to distract myself I became a golf addict in my retirement this summer. I have played more rounds since May than I had played in the last 20 years. I play mostly by myself with Von along to keep score and caddy. We play at what I call a blue collar resort, at Eagle Crest here in Redmond. We enjoy the green environment and wildlife and the time together. When I am not so embarrassed about my game we will begin to play more with others!

So I hope everyone is or has been able to have time for self care as we gear up for the continuing fight for economic and social justice. I know I am ready. Resist!

*Greg Ledbetter, President SEIU 503 Retirees
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Fill your life with adventures not things. Have stories to tell not stuff to show.