

LOCAL FOCUS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER SEIU LOCAL 503 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SUB-LOCAL 085

NOVEMBER 2016

UNION WORKERS, LEADERS REACT TO MEASURE 97 DEFEAT

Brian Rudiger, executive director-elect, SEIU 503
Rob Sisk, president, SEIU 503

We may not have won this campaign, but we did change the debate. Almost every Oregonian now knows that we have the lowest corporate taxes in the nation and tremendous needs to fund health care, stabilize the budget and build a better education system.

We also built the strongest, most diverse coalition Oregon has ever seen. The A Better Oregon coalition is something we only dreamed about when we started this work two years ago. The coalition is going to stick together and take this fight to Salem.

During the past 20 months 1,300 endorsers and more than 10,000 volunteers had 225,000 conversations

MEASURE 97 CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



During an October panel, State Rep. Phil Barnhart (D-Lane County) provided background on Oregon's current revenue model and addressed Measure 97's potential impact on higher education. Speakers represented United Academics of UO, SEIU 503, the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, the Student Labor Action Project, and Associated Students of UO. © AARON MONTOYA

LOCAL 085 MONTHLY MEETING
Wednesday, December 14
12–1 p.m. Ford Alumni Center 403
Lunch is provided.
ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

KEY ■ MEETING

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, November 23
5–7 p.m.
Lewis Integrative Sciences 217

CONTACT ACTION TEAM
Wednesday, December 7
12pm - 1:30pm
EMU Alsea River Room

STRIKE HARDSHIP FUND COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 15
12–1 p.m.
Lewis Integrative Sciences 217

JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 15
677 E 12th Ave.—4th floor
SEIU representatives meet regularly with people who work with UO Employee and Labor Relations to maintain communication and discuss issues.

STEWARDS COUNCIL
Wednesday, December 21
Lewis Integrative Sciences 217
Only stewards, please.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, December 28
5–7 p.m. Lewis Integrative Sciences 217

MEASURE 97 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

OUR STRUGGLE FOR FAIR WAGES, TO PROTECT BENEFITS CONTINUES

with Oregon voters. Our massive field operation means we talked to more voters than any campaign in Oregon history. What we heard at doors and on the phones was that Oregonians want to raise graduation rates, reduce classroom sizes, make healthcare more affordable and give seniors the resources they need to live in dignity. That our corporate tax rates rank 50th nationally is unacceptable to them.

This fight is far from over. In fact, it's just beginning.

Johnny Earl, chief bargaining delegate and vice president

Our upcoming negotiations with the universities regarding the financial portion of our contract is shaping up to be a significant challenge. With the defeat of Measure 97, which proposed a tax on big corporations doing business in Oregon, the state certainly isn't doling out extra money—it doesn't have it.

We are in a fight just to keep what we have. Here we go again. If Measure 97 passed, there was a chance that the universities' proposals during upcoming bargaining sessions were to be somewhat reasonable from workers' perspectives. Now, all state agencies are expected to take a 10% cut in their budgets. I'm sure that doesn't help the universities fund our wages. The cost of living continues to rise, and we shouldn't have to go broke while working here.

Kurt Willcox, former SEIU 503-085 officer and non-faculty staff member, UO Board of Trustees

The defeat of Ballot Measure 97 means that the University of Oregon and UO employees will face an extremely difficult financial situation next year. The upcoming state budget is already projected to be \$1 billion short of maintaining current services. Funding for the PERS system will significantly add to the university's costs, as well as those of most public employers. There will be great pressure on the state legislature to find revenue to improve our K-12 public schools—even if that means taking it from other programs.

Higher education will once again be on the chopping block in Salem. We will have to work hard to simply maintain our current inadequate level of funding. Even if we succeed there, UO President Schill already signaled that he will be forced to propose a sizable—probably double-digit—tuition increase for our students.

Our upcoming SEIU contract negotiations over economic issues promises to be brutal. I expect we will be confronted with takeaway proposals that will seriously impact our health care and standard of living. In addition, many of our members will likely have to deal with layoffs. Our commitment to each other and our willingness to fight for a fair contract will definitely be tested next year.

Louie Vidmar, steward

Love or hate the election outcome, we all must live with the results, together. Following are some ways to get involved.

- Join a union meeting—every 2nd Wednesday at noon. Lunch is provided. Stay informed about issues that affect you and your job, and learn how to help defend workers.
- Be a CAT or steward. Help connect and protect workers.
- Join and attend your neighborhood association, and seek to understand and protect your neighbors.

 www.eugene-or.gov/535/Neighborhood-Associations

- Know your local, state, and federal legislators and who plans to run during 2018. Educate yourself and vote.
- Email your legislators and follow them on Facebook; share your thoughts and views with them. Hold them accountable.
- Join the local branch of your preferred political party. ■

PERS PAYMENTS WEIGH ON CONTRACT TALKS

By *Johnny Earl*,
chief bargaining delegate

A sleeping giant awaits labor unions on campus. Oregon public employers, including the University of Oregon, face significant expenditure increases during future years. The problem stems from the Public Employees Retirement System or PERS, and it could severely hamper our progress toward fair labor contracts.

UO Chief Financial Officer Jamie Moffitt told the Eugene Register-Guard newspaper that the problem is the high cost of wages and benefits; that is why student tuition continues to increase. There is more to it.

Saying labor costs are too high when some administrators make more than four or five times the amount of money classified workers do is a weak argument. Don't forget: most administrators reap double or triple the amount of benefits you and I can expect.

Anti-PERS groups continually point to some retirees who receive six-figure payments from the system annually. To be clear, none of them are classified workers; some might receive benefits equal to their final salaries, but most collect pensions of about \$20,000–\$30,000 per year; it depends on their hire date.

PERS has three tiers, which people fall into based upon their hire date. Each reduced workers' retirement benefits.

- Tier One—before 1996

- Tier Two—1996–2003
 - Tier Three—2003–present called Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan
- Tier One employees were promised a 7.7 percent annual increase in their PERS account. The high rate of return was meant to attract and retain employees when wages weren't competitive. In essence, the state told employees their retirement benefits would make up for their low regular income. During the '90s, stocks hit all-time highs and the amount of money in most PERS accounts more than doubled; some people retired with benefits larger than their final salaries.

Expect major attempts during the 2017 legislative session to further reduce PERS benefits

PERS costs also increased, because more people lived longer than the state initially assumed. As a result, the state legislature changed the program, which made it less valuable to employees. They called it Tier Two and

- increased the retirement age from 58 to 60,
- changed the projected earnings for each PERS account to the amount it actually earned,
- and eliminated the

guarantee of earnings if the market didn't perform.

In 2003, the state legislature made further significant reductions when it established Tier Three. This was the start of the Individual Account Program, a defined contribution retirement program. Legislators again increased the retirement age, this time from 60 to 65, and they discontinued a feature of the plan for calculating payments called the Money Match Method.

Since 2003, the costs of providing PERS benefits continued to increase. Legislators passed two laws during 2013 to reduce the costs, but most of their provisions were declared invalid by the Oregon Supreme Court during 2015. The court essentially said the state can't reduce the benefits it promised to employees; it can only make changes to the benefits it intends to offer future employees.

Expect major attempts during the 2017 legislative session to further reduce PERS benefits. Those efforts will affect those of us who are still working. Expect the universities to fight us during contract negotiations, set to begin in January. To be successful, we need to be strong, and we need support from our United Academics, Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation and student allies. Together: that's how we keep what we have, secure a fair cost-of-living increase and hold back the sleeping giant. ■

IT WORKERS IMPACTED BY REORGANIZATION SPEAK UP

By *Jennifer Perren*, member

The university decided to retool IT operations and announced their decision to workers Friday, August 26. The UO hired consultant Harvey Blustain who authored a report called “Reorganization of Information Technology at the University of Oregon,” which details his suggestions. The university asked for workers’ feedback via an online survey.

Eager to provide input, the UO IT community worked with a SEIU 503–085 union steward who helped organize group discussions. During five face-to-face meetings, IT workers from central and distributed units across campus surfaced issues that impacted each attendee, their IT unit and colleagues, their supported personnel, and the university as a whole. A number of themes emerged from the discussions; following are just a few of 17.

- Project goals beyond reorganization are unclear
- Administrative, Academic and Communications labels are being applied to IT staff unnecessarily
- Retention problems are already occurring that are directly related to the reorganization project

**UO TRANSFORM IT
FEEDBACK MEETING
Friday | December 2**
11 a.m.–Noon
Knight Library
Browsing Room

Workers can give feedback on the reorganization project—called Transform IT—during a meeting with Interim CIO Chris Krabel and Dean of Libraries Adriene Lim.

People who are classified workers and others who are officers of administration drafted 23 specific solutions, including recommendations to:

- extend the survey deadline (the current survey closed),
- clarify problems and goals,
- set metrics by which to measure success of the project,
- and to complete the plan before executing it.

The meetings were well received and attended. Notes were sent to the UO IT email list DeptComp. Please stay apprised of the important campus-wide project through the provost’s project page at the following location. ■

<https://provost.uoregon.edu/content/transform-it>

BIG CORPORATE MONEY FOUGHT AGAINST M97

The anti-Ballot Measure 97 committee dumped more than \$25 million into their campaign. Most of it came from large, out-of-state corporations—those who would have had to pay the tax. Following are some of the 64 companies that donated \$100,000 or more to beat Ballot Measure 97. This data comes from the Oregon Secretary of State’s ORESTAR website as of November 1.

- › Albertsons-Safeway (Portland Division) \$2,383,000
- › Costco Wholesale Corporation \$2,383,000
- › Kroger/Fred Meyer \$2,383,000
- › Lithia Motors, Inc. \$855,000
- › Cambia Health Solutions (Regence, BC/BS) \$530,000
- › Comcast Cable \$465,000
- › Automobile Dealers Assoc. of Portland \$450,000
- › Chevron Corporation \$424,000
- › Standard Insurance \$403,450
- › Oregon Association of Realtors \$350,900
- › Weyerhaeuser Company \$335,000
- › Phillips 66 \$292,000
- › Sysco Corporation \$286,990
- › PGE (Portland General Electric) \$280,000
- › BP America Inc. \$254,000
- › Membrane Holdings LLC \$250,000
- › Boise Cascade Company \$250,000
- › Walmart Stores, Inc. \$250,000

DESPITE 97 RESULT, PEOPLE STILL OUR BIGGEST STRENGTH

Corporations threw a lot of money into defeating Ballot Measure 97. In the campaign to get big corporations to pay their fair share of taxes, our biggest strength was people power—and it still is. Following are some of your co-workers' stories about contacting voters and urging them to Vote YES on 97.

CHUCK THEOBALD
INFORMATION TECH. CONSULTANT
LEWIS CENTER FOR NEUROIMAGING

I volunteered for the Ballot Measure 97 phone bank effort, because Oregon needed this measure.

Services that Oregonians rely upon suffer from the lack of revenue. By staffing the phone bank, I did my part to make sure voters know about this measure and how it would help Oregonians.

I greatly enjoy talking with fellow SEIU members from around the state and have had many good conversations. I think I even moved some people who might have voted "no" towards a "yes" vote! The one-on-one approach really does work! I would encourage everyone to spend some time phone banking. It is a great time, with good company, good food and good conversation.

CIMMERON GILLESPIE
EDUCATION PROGRAM ASSISTANT 2
CAMPUS OPERATIONS

I really enjoy phone conversations with fellow SEIU members about Ballot Measure 97, because it's a great way to get to know our fellow workers across the state.

In a few hours, my experiences gave me a much better sense of how many members are doing. Getting to spend time having meaningful conversations should be at the core of every member experience (that and winning better pay and benefits). I encourage every member to attend a calling session, because it's important to have real conversations on an issue that could vastly improve the funding for our entire education and health care systems.

JASON STONE
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
AND WRITING SPECIALIST
LIBRARY

I called people and knocked on doors in support of Measure 97, because I understood the enormous implications of this ballot measure for higher education workers in Oregon.

Measure 97 will at last provide the funds our embattled K-12 schools need and free up general fund money. In turn, the legislature can use those funds to begin reversing the downward spiral of disinvestment in higher education. On the other hand, should Measure 97 go down in defeat, I can see little alternative to more of the same fiscal "solutions" that have long plagued our universities—tuition hikes for our students, deep cuts to the vital resources we need to do our jobs, and the grim specter of more layoffs.

Personally, I don't much like talking on the phone, but I realized I couldn't let that stop me from volunteering to phone bank for Yes on 97. I believed so strongly in the importance of this ballot initiative, I was inspired to move outside my comfort zone. You know what? It turns out that phone banking is really no big deal. The hardest call to make is the first one. You get the hang of it pretty fast, and soon it ceases to be intimidating at all. I encourage all 085 members to join us at a phone bank. ■

STRIKE HARDSHIP FUND DISBURSEMENT PROCEDURE SET

By **Chuck Theobald**, *Strike Hardship Fund and Member Needs Committee Chair*

One of the charges of the Strike Hardship Fund and Member Needs Committee is to disburse money to members who have suffered financial hardship as a result of strike participation. In order to do so, clear guidelines should be available to the committee and to the membership. The documents we found were somewhat dated and were not clearly specific to our local, so we began an effort to update these documents and to make them available for our members to see. The committee is pleased to announce that we have completed this work.

We updated and finalized

our procedures related to disbursement of strike hardship funds, and we created an updated application that members can use to apply to receive these funds. The documents are available at local085.seiu503.org, the Local 085 website. Please read them for clarity regarding the requirements and criteria for disbursing funds to members in the event of a strike. Please note that one of the requirements is full participation in the strike, which typically means four hours per day working on strike actions like picketing and other activities.

Please review these

documents. Hopefully, we will not be forced to strike and our members do not have to use the application, but if we do need to strike for a fair contract, the procedure and funds are available. Please send your questions to Strike Hardship Fund and Member Needs Committee Chair Chuck Theobald, at theobald7@gmail.com.

Lastly, but not least, many thanks to committee member Lydia Harlan, who took the lead on this project through many drafts and editing sessions. She is happy to be done with it and to move on to the fun business of fund-raising! ■

THANK YOU

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS

★ Thank you to the following people who are stewards for their service to our union. Your union brothers and sisters appreciate you.

★ John Anthony—25 years of service

★ John Ahlen—5 years serving as a strong leader

Both Anthony and Ahlen served previously as chief steward during their time on campus.

★ Thank you to the people who collected pledge cards from voters affirming their yes on Measure 97.

★ TK Landazuri

★ Joann Malone

★ Liz Hahn

★ Lois Yoshishige

★ Louie Vidmar

★ Nicole Nelson

★ Theodora Ko Thompson

★ Zach Benedict

★ Johnny Earl

★ Lynn Harrell

Some people who collected cards are not in our database.

★ Thank you to folks who volunteered time to call Oregon voters in support of Measure 97—A Better Oregon. The number following each person's name represents the number of phone bank sessions they donated.

★ Kurt Willcox—11

★ Chuck Theobald—3

★ Cimmeron Gillespie—2

★ Liz Hahn—1

★ Jason Stone—6

★ Lois Yoshishige—4

★ Morgan Blake—1

★ Theodora Ko Thompson—6

★ Zach Benedict—5

★ John Taylor—2

IN FOCUS

Read In Focus, a question-and-answer series to learn about the people who are members of the Service Employees International Union Local 085.

Questions by
Aaron Montoya, editor

Please introduce yourself and explain your job.

My name is Zachary Benedict—I go by Zach. I work at the American English Institute as the Student Engagement Coordinator of our activities and volunteer programs.

The mission of my job is to provide real-life experiences for our international second-language English students in which to practice their English in purposeful and meaningful ways outside of their classes. I've been on campus for almost five years, and not only do I love the University of Oregon, I absolutely love the people that I serve at the American English Institute



Zach Benedict serves as SEIU 503-085 secretary, a general council delegate and a steward.

and hold deep pride in the contributions of my department to the university community.

What does the union mean to you? How did you become involved with 085?

Being a member of SEIU is also something that I take zealous pride in. We stand up for each other, we fight back when things aren't right, and we work hard for a better life, not just for ourselves, but also for our families and friends.

I affirmatively believe the words "Stronger Together." During a time of hardship, colleagues that I knew and members who I didn't know donated sick leave hours to me. That meant so much to me at a time when lifting me up, even just a little bit was more

ZACH BENEDICT

impactful for my family and I than words can describe.

When an opportunity came up to get more involved and help others, I took it. I started out as our Hardship Leave Liaison, and now currently serve as our local Secretary, a General Council Delegate, and a Steward. I completed two Member Leader Development Program waves and graduated from the 2016 AFL-CIO UO LERC Summer School, all during this year.

Beyond the UO and the union, what is Zach all about?

Beyond my work at the UO, I love spending time with my partner Dustin, our cat Willow, our two dogs Dezi and Tito and our most recent babies, Buttercup, Birdy and Bette—chickens!

I'm the youngest brother of seven siblings, an uncle to 17 children and a great-uncle to three more children. I truly love how close my family is, and I appreciate their support of my passion for service.

CALL YOUR STEWARD FOR HELP

Please leave your name and phone number so a steward can call you.

Call for help with a work problem, a disciplinary issue or contract violation.

541 346 0321

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SUB-LOCAL 085**

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