



OREGON WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

VOTE YOUR VALUES

April 11, 2013

TO: Representative Margaret Doherty, Chair, House Business and Labor Committee
CC: Members of the House Business and Labor Committee
FROM: Steve Hughes, State Director, Oregon Working Families Party
RE: HB 2977, HB 3142, HB 3307

Chair Doherty and Representatives,

The Oregon Working Families Party is guided by the principle that working people deserve fairness in the work place and dignity in their communities. We have a track record of fighting for issues that matter to the everyday lives of working people. It is for this reason that I am writing today to express our support for three bills before you that, if enacted, will make significant positive impacts in the lives of many working Oregonians.

HB 2977

This bill will expand protections to workers in the construction industry similar to those already in place in the agricultural and forest products sectors. The bill will require construction labor contractors be licensed by the Bureau of Labor and Industries and help prevent the practice known as "wage theft" when workers in the construction industry are not paid and have no options for recourse when the labor contractor who hired them can not be found. We believe this is a common sense measure consistent with current statute, and we believe it should be adopted to protect workers in the construction industry as well.

HB 3142

This bill seeks to standardize the definitions of employer and employee within Oregon wage claim law to match federal law. This is important because it will make it harder for bad-actor employers to deny that they are an employer in order to commit wage theft. HB 3142 will also make it harder for an employer to misclassify workers by categorizing their employees as independent contractors.

HB 3307

This is known as the "breaks bill." Even though BOLI regulations require two 10 minute paid breaks and a paid 30 minute meal period during an eight hour shift (unless the employee is relieved of all duties), workers have no avenue for remedy if they are denied these break periods. This opens the door to abuse and has real ramifications in terms of worker health and workplace safety. We understand that the lead advocates for this bill have worked to craft amendments aimed at satisfying concerns of some members on the committee, and we encourage you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Steve Hughes
Oregon Working Families Party