

Portland, Oregon: Pre-Election “Anti-Austerity Protest”

By [Shamus Cooke](#)

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On November 3rd Portland community and labor groups will declare “enough is enough” by organizing a first for the U.S. — a large demonstration against government austerity cuts.

The protest takes aim at the governmental policy of austerity — where public deficits on a city, state, and federal level are being addressed by “cuts only” budgets, resulting in continued de-funding of education, health care, transportation, and other vital public services, combined with an attack on public sector workers.

The pre-election date of the protest is no accident, but an intentional action that, in part, aims to bring awareness to the post-election cuts slated to “fix” the national deficit. Although Democrats and Republicans are still wrangling over a specific dollar amount of cuts, they do agree that at least \$4 trillion in cuts — including social programs like Medicare, education and likely Social Security — are “necessary” (\$4 trillion is Obama’s proposal; Paul Ryan’s is \$6 trillion).

Nearly all politicians claim there is no alternative to austerity cuts, which in Portland have caused devastation to public schools and other social services.

The alternative solution to austerity is obvious: budget deficits should be fixed by taxing the corporations and the wealthy, who have benefited for decades from a bi-partisan policy of lower tax rates, while working people have seen property, liquor, and other regressive taxes levied against them. These pro-corporate policies are in large part the cause of the current deficit, the recession — caused by the big banks — is another cause.

Giant protests against austerity in Europe have attracted hundreds of thousands and evolved into citywide general strikes, thanks in large part to the active participation of the European labor movement. In Portland, the anti-austerity demonstration is endorsed by locals from Service Employees International Union, Communication Workers of America, Letter Carriers, Laborers, Jobs With Justice, and other community groups including Occupy Portland.

If the Portland protest is large enough it will have succeeded in educating the community about the special interest, pro-corporate agenda behind the national and local austerity cuts, while also showing practical alternatives to austerity: making the rich and corporations pay for the crisis they created.

Ideally, the Portland demonstration will be the beginning of a working-class coalition of labor and community groups with the potential of growing into a powerful European-like movement capable defeating not only city and state austerity budgets, but working with other cities to change social policy on a national level.

Economists agree that the economic downturn shows no signs of real recovery, ensuring that austerity will remain an issue that threatens the livelihoods of all working people for years to come. Better to start fighting it now!

The protest begins 1pm, at Portland's Holladay Park on November 3rd.

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