

Latino

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that would have provided drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants living and working in Oregon.

She was the first Latina to serve in the Oregon House and served from 2013 to 2016. She served along with Joe Gallegos, another Democratic House member, who didn't seek re-election in 2016.

"We had allies in the house who were strong supporters of the driver's bill, but having somebody else who was Latino in the House was really important to me," Vega Pederson said.

But they weren't successful with the driver's license bill. It was defeated by a well-funded effort when Measure 88 was placed on the 2014 ballot.

"We knew it was going to be a harder campaign to fight, but we didn't have the broader understanding that there was going to be a concerted effort to move it to the ballot," Vega Pederson said. "The Latino community took a hard hit with that defeat."

She said Castillo, who was the first Latina to serve in the Senate, helped pave the way for Latino legislators.

"There were a lot of champions before us, and we are finally seeing that work reflected in this year's session," said Vega Pederson, now a Multnomah County commissioner.

New lawmakers reflect community

Issues affecting communities of color are no different than in other communities, Alonso León said.

Education, job security, housing and economic stability matter to everyone. She said the value of a diverse Legislature comes when lawmakers are able to tap into their own experiences to help frame law to better serve diverse groups.

For Alonso León, who was born along Lake Patzcuaro, a region home to the indigenous Purepecha people of Michoacán, Mexico, her upbringing means she can better represent the Latino community.

She came to the United States when she was five years old. Her parents were farmworkers supporting a family of seven. During hot summers, she would help her parents pick berries. At 12, she interpreted housing information for her parents while speaking with a realtor when her family bought their first home.

"I don't think my parents anticipated one of their children would become a legislator," Alonso León said with a laugh. "But they certainly created that opportunity by coming to the United States for a better life."

When Alonso León kicked off her campaign, she knocked on roughly 4,000 doors in Woodburn with fliers translated in English, Spanish and Russian. She said she met people who said they had never voted because candidates never looked like them, spoke their language or shared their experiences.

She first learned of her potential influence on the community when she spoke with an 18-year-old high school student in English about her campaign and switched to Spanish when her father introduced himself in Spanish.

"He said 'I just want to say that, for the first time ever, I get to express myself in my native language,'" Alonso León said. "That was such a powerful moment for me because even if you speak another language, you can show your emotion and articulate things that are important to you. I wanted to cry right there in the doorway."

Acción Política PCUNista, a Latino activist organization based in Woodburn, backed Alonso León's campaign and helped support the first elected Latino majority school board in the state, where 80 percent of Woodburn School District students are Latino.

Group volunteers knocked on 15,000 doors, registered 400 Latino voters and assisted about 200 others with their ballots in service of the election, according to Acción Política PCUNista.

Latino candidates are a "demographic inevitability," said Ron Mize, associate professor of language, culture and society at Oregon State University.

Roughly 40 percent of Oregon Latinos are eligible to vote, according to the Pew Research Center. Mize said that number will climb over the next decade as Oregon Latinos reach 18 years old.

Millennials represent 41.5 percent of the eligible Latino voter population nationwide, according to the U.S.



Rep. Diego Hernandez, D-Portland, said minority influence can catch up to population growth with the help of equitable education. MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

Census Bureau.

Mize wrote a report assessing the social, political and economic role of Latinos in Oregon for the statewide Oregon Latino Agenda for Action.

"What has made this cycle particularly compelling, and why the story looks a little bit different right now, is that both Teresa and Diego were really experienced before they got to the statewide office," Mize said. "They knew what they were doing, and they had a good cadre of supporters."

That, Mize said, is an early sign of growing Latino influence.

"I really do feel like this is the beginning," he said. However, Moreno, who also serves on the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, said Oregon's growing Latino population doesn't necessarily equate to growing representation.

"Latino population has doubled in the last decade, but what has not doubled is our representation," Moreno said. "What has not doubled is our access to equitable resources, or economic opportunities, or civic opportunities."

Education paves way for political shift

Hernandez, who also serves on the Reynolds School District school board in Fairview, said minority influence can catch up to population growth with the help of equitable education.

He points to low graduation rates and high drop out rates for students of color that are representative of historical inequities in the education system.

"That's also symbolic of the poverty their parents have to face, so yes, we had a successful session in terms of social wins, but undoing generational poverty is going to require more action from the Legislature," Hernandez said.

Born in Los Angeles, Hernandez grew up in Portland where he found himself the only student of color, attending six elementary schools and three middle schools before completing high school, college and graduate school.

His mother was a single parent with four children. She cleaned houses to support the family, sometimes enlisting 11-year-old Hernandez to help.

"I saw the experiences my immigrant family went through, and that gave me a perspective that folks in power may not have," Hernandez said.

When he was elected to the school board in 2013, he was only 26. He was the first Latino elected to the board in a district with a Latino majority. Today, he is joined by his colleague Ricardo Ruiz.

He said it is important to build from the growing representation in community organizations, school boards, city councils and the Legislature in order to advance the next generation of Latino leaders.

Hernandez also believes the 2017 session reflected a cultural shift in the state, but it isn't because there was an easy path to representation. He said Latinos have been forced to challenge power, and challenge what he refers to as Oregon's "status quo," as it relates to minorities in leadership roles.

"It's challenging when you are in the minority and literally marginalized," Hernandez said. "So when you challenge power ... I would say some individuals really want to target you for who you are rather than your political beliefs."

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Public Hearing

The Silver Falls School District Board of Directors will conduct a public hearing before the Local Contract Review Board at their next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The intent of this hearing is to review the findings and receive public comment.

In the Matter of Exception Request of Silver Falls School District Silverton Middle School Part 2 - Gymnasium

FINDINGS OF FACT

ORS 279C.335(1) requires, with certain exceptions, that all Public Improvement contracts be based on competitive bids and, under ORS 279C.375, awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. ORS 279C.335(2) permits the Local Contract Review Board, as the Silver Falls School District contract review authority, to grant, under certain conditions, specific exemptions from the requirement for competitive bidding upon the approval of specified findings.

OAR 137-049-0620, division 249 allows the Local Contract Review Board to exempt a Public Improvement contract from the requirements to be competitively bid, provided written findings supporting the use of non-competitive bid process show compliance with OAR 137-049-0600 to 137-049-0690 and applicable statutes. The written findings report is available for review at the School District prior to the public hearing; please contact Lorin Stanley at (503)873-5303 for a copy of the findings.

The hearing for review of these findings will be held at 7:00 PM on November 13, 2017 at the Silverton Middle School, 714 Schlador Street, Silverton, OR 97381, as published in the public notice section in the Silverton Appeal Tribune on November 1, 2017 and the Daily Journal of Commerce on October 27, 2017.

Silverton Appeal November 1, 2017

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