

...Union member vote drove shift in balance of power

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Barker, a retired president of the Portland Police Association; Paul Holvey, a representative with the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters; Larry Galizio of the American Federation of Teachers; and Mike Schaufler, a former member of the Laborers Union.

With Democrats now in charge of the House (31-29 in unofficial results), several of the "labor" lawmakers are in prime positions to become committee chairs. Rosenbaum told the *Northwest Labor Press* she was interested in chairing the Revenue Committee. Witt said Trade and Economic Development would be his choice, given the fact that his district (District 31 in Columbia and Clatsop counties) is experiencing billions of dollars in building investments, much of it on ethanol plants.

On statewide ballot measures, 85 percent of those backed by the Oregon AFL-CIO passed. The state labor federation helped defeat Measure 40 (electing judges by district); Measure 41 (Bill Sizemore's insurance and credit scores); Measure 45 (term limits); Measure 46 (campaign finance constitutional amendment) and Measure 48 (state spending limits based on population growth plus inflation). Labor helped pass Measure 44, expansion of the Oregon Prescription Drug Program to allow all Oregonians with no medical insurance to get lower-cost prescription drugs.

The AFL's only loss was Measure

47, which limits how much money people, groups and candidates can give to political candidates. It passed with more than 53 percent of the vote.

In Washington State, labor-backed Democrats extended their majorities in both the State Senate (32-17 unofficially) and State House (57-41 unofficially). Among the winners were Deb Wallace, Bill Fromhold and Jim Moeller representing Clark County in the House.

In Congressional races, all of the labor-endorsed U.S. representatives in Oregon and Southwest Washington won re-election easily, including Oregon Democrats Earl Blumenauer, David Wu, Darlene Hooley and Peter DeFazio; and Washington Democrat Brian Baird. In Oregon's Second District, long-shot challenger Carol Voisin lost to Republican incumbent Greg Walden. Walden was endorsed by the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council.

For the next two years, Democrats will control the U.S. House. The margin at press time was 230-196, with nine still undecided at press time.

Of the four Oregon Democrats, only Peter DeFazio was in office when the Democrats last held a majority in the House. Given his seniority, DeFazio is

expected to head the surface transportation subcommittee, where he's likely to be even more effective in procuring funds for investment in Oregon's transportation infrastructure.

In the U.S. Senate, Democrats will lead by a much narrower 51-49 margin. Helping to create that majority was the re-election of labor-backed Washington U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, who easily defeated well-financed Republican challenger Mike McGavick.

Union voters drove home the victory for most of the labor-endorsed politicians. According to exit polling and a national election night survey, union households accounted for roughly 1 out of 4 voters nationwide, and three-quarters of those union votes went to labor-backed candidates for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

The Oregon AFL-CIO was recognized by the national labor federation as a leader in statewide voter outreach, with 900 active volunteers contacting more than 76 percent of its

affiliated union members either at work, at home, through newsletters or through worksite fliers.

"The key to victory was rank-and-file volunteers contacting fellow members comparing candidates and spreading the message one-on-one about our issues — good jobs, health care, high-quality schools, and safe pensions," said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain, "Now we can get on with our legislative agenda."

National AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said just electing a new Congress won't be enough to turn the country around for workers. "Now we're determined to work together to move an agenda, on Capitol Hill and in our states, to change America and renew economic opportunity for all," he said.

The national AFL-CIO will call on the 100th Congress to accomplish five items in their first days in office:

- Raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour.
- Restore workers' freedom to form

unions: Pass the Employee Free Choice Act and reverse the National Labor Relations Board's ruling that allows employers to deny workers' union rights by classifying them as supervisors.

- Overturn the ban prohibiting Medicare from negotiating with drug companies for more affordable prescription drugs.

- Stop sending jobs overseas: Reward companies that create jobs at home instead of giving tax dollars to companies that export jobs.

- Reverse the cuts in student loans made by the Republican Congress.

DeFazio told the *Labor Press* much of that labor agenda has a decent chance of passage now.

"There should be some beer being poured in the house of labor," DeFazio said, "whereas I think a lot of corks stayed in the bottles in corporate offices on election night."

The minimum wage increase is expected to come first when the new Congress takes office in January, and DeFazio said backers may be able to get enough Republican support to reach a veto-proof majority.

The federal minimum wage has been frozen at \$5.15 an hour for so long — nine years — that 22 states now have minimum wage laws superceding the federal minimum; and on election night, voters in six more states raised their minimum wages: Arizona (to \$6.75), Colorado (\$6.85), Missouri (\$6.50), Montana and Nevada (\$6.15 each) and Ohio (\$6.85).

As for the Employee Free Choice Act — originally drafted by the late Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) — labor is in for the fight of its life. The bill would rewrite the nation's labor law, making it harder for employers to squash unionization.

The bill's prime House sponsor is Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), who will chair the House Education and Workforce Committee. Its prime Senate sponsor is veteran Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who will chair the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Both will undoubtedly pass their bills out of committee. And passage in the House is likely. Even in the current Congress, the labor movement was able to get 215 of the 435 House members to co-sponsor the bill.

The Senate is the hurdle for the Employee Free Choice Act. That's because the GOP would still have enough votes, 49, to filibuster the legislation.

Even if it passed the Senate, the bill would face certain veto at the hands of President Bush.



Jeff Barker



Larry Galizio



Diane Rosenbaum



Brad Witt



Paul Holvey



Mike Caudle

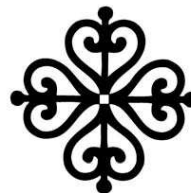
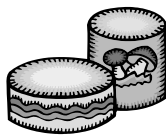
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