

AFSCME #88 backs three in Multnomah Co. races

The union that represents most workers at Multnomah County announced Feb. 20 that it will back Deborah Kafoury, Rob Milesnick and Carla Piluso for three open seats on the non-partisan County Commission.

Multnomah County Employees Local 88, an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) represents some 2,700 workers there. The county is responsible for jails, libraries, bridges and an array of social services for the aged, sick, disabled and mentally ill.

Local 88 is the largest of the eight unions representing county workers. Its three-step endorsement process includes written questionnaires from all candidates, interviews by the AFSCME Local 88 Political Action Committee, and participation in a Candidates' Forum. That forum — held at the general membership meeting Feb. 20 — allowed candidates to respond directly to

questions submitted by members.

"It's an exciting meeting. I love it because everybody is so involved," said union president Becky Steward.

Following the forum, members discuss and then vote on their endorsement selections.

Kafoury is a former House Democratic leader from Northeast Portland. She served as a state rep from 1999 to 2004. She graduated from Portland's Grant High School and received a bachelor's degree in English from Whitman College. Also running in District 1 are Wes Soderback and Mark Newey. Neither responded to AFSCME's questionnaire or invitation to the forum.

Rob Milesnick received a law degree from Syracuse University. He works as a lobbyist for ODS Health Plans. Prior to that he worked for the Oregon Judicial Department supervising DUII probationers in Multnomah

County. Also running for the seat in District 3 are Judy Shprack, Mike Delman, Bruce Barclay and Roy Burkett. Burkett did not respond to the union's invite.

Carla Piluso has a 29-year career in law enforcement, including the last five years as chief of police for the City of Gresham. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and speech from Willamette University. Her 95-year-old father was a longtime member

of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and Piluso herself was a shop steward for the Teamsters. She has been with the police department for 29 years. Also running for the seat representing East Multnomah County are Diane McKeel and Ken Quinby.

The primary election is May 20. If no candidate gets 50 percent plus one, the top two vote-getters will face off in November.

Gardner won't run for Congress; other candidates still deciding

Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, has decided not to run for Congress this year.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley announced Feb. 8 that she will not seek re-election to her seat in the 5th Congressional District.

Gardner discussed a possible run with political advisers and his family, and late last month announced he would not run, saying that spending time with his children would come first. Gardner has two-and-a-half more years to serve in his second term as labor commissioner.

Two other potential Democratic candidates also won't seek the job. They are Paul Evans and Brigadier General Mike Caldwell. Evans is an aide to Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and spouse of Hooley's chief of staff. Caldwell is well-known by the building trades and in AFSCME circles at the Oregon Military Department.

Meanwhile, State Sen. Kurt Schrader (D-Canby) has thrown his hat into the ring in the Democratic primary, and former State Treasurer Jim Hill is rumored to be interested.

On the Republican side, Kevin Mannix and Mike Erickson are looking hard at the open seat. Mannix is a Democrat-turned-Republican state legislator who ran unsuccessfully for governor and attorney general. Erickson challenged Hooley two years ago — and lost by a sizable margin.

Only one Republican candidate had filed to run at press time. He is R.J. Wilson, a Salem dance instructor.

SEIU Local 503 and 49 endorse Kroger for AG

Service Employees International Union Locals 503 and 49 have endorsed Democrat John Kroger for Oregon attorney general.

SEIU is Oregon's largest union, representing nearly 50,000 workers in the hospital systems, long-term care, property services and public-service sectors.

"We endorsed John Kroger because we need an attorney general who will stand up for the people of Oregon and John has a history of doing the people's work," said Kate Pingo, secretary-treasurer of Local 49.

SEIU joins Carpenters Union Locals 247 and 2154 of Portland and 1065 of Salem in supporting Kroger, along with former Gov. John Kitzhaber and City Commissioners Erik Sten, Dan Saltzman and Randy Leonard.

Kroger is a Lewis & Clark Law School professor and a former federal prosecutor, who says he will combat the state's meth crisis by pushing for tougher enforcement and treatment, will hold polluters accountable by imposing fines and jail time, and will fight for the civil rights of Oregonians by arguing those cases himself in court.

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