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Workers Memorial Day service in Portland



Family and friends of Jeff Helgeson (foreground) raise a flag in his memory during a Workers Memorial Day ceremony April 28 sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. Helgeson, a member of Laborers Local 320, was killed on the job in July 2007 after being struck in the head by a falling 8-foot jackhammer on a downtown Portland construction project. He was one of more than 59 workers killed on the job in Oregon in 2007. In the background, flags are raised in remembrance of each of those workers. Nationwide, 153 workers lose their lives on an average day as a result of workplace injuries and disease. Another 11,233 are injured. Union members around the world observed Workers Memorial Day April 28 to remember workers and to draw attention to the problem of workplace hazards and the need to strengthen worker safety and health laws.

Union foe Sizemore poised for comeback

With financial backing from several conservative millionaires, Sizemore has filed six ballot measures in Oregon

Longtime union foe Bill Sizemore appears poised to make a comeback this year.

Sizemore — the most prolific user of Oregon's ballot initiative process — is a perennial backer of proposals to limit union political influence, cut state income taxes for the wealthy, and base school teacher pay on student test scores. Voters have rejected nearly all of his ballot measures, but with the financial backing of several conservative millionaires, Sizemore continues to return his proposals to the ballot — proposals that cost unions money and effort to defeat.

Sizemore was out of commission for a few years after a Multnomah County circuit court jury in 2002 found his groups guilty of a pattern of fraud and forgery. Sizemore's groups were ordered to pay \$2.5 million dam-

ages to the plaintiffs — the Oregon Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon.

In 2003, after lawyers for the union plaintiffs demonstrated that Sizemore had continued the same practices the jury had condemned, Judge Jerome LaBarre issued an injunction dissolving his organizations and restricting how he could handle money for ballot measure campaigns for five years.

Those prohibitions are due to expire soon, and in any case, Sizemore has come up with ways to evade the judge's order — as well as a 2007 law passed by the Oregon Legislature to stop abuses in the initiative process.

The Oregon secretary of state may be on track to approve six of Sizemore's initiatives for the November 2008 ballot. They would:

- Remove limits on the state income tax deduction for federal income taxes paid by individuals. [This would benefit the highest-income tax payers and deplete state government of revenues that fund education, public safety, and other priorities. Voters have rejected it before.]

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From Democratic Party

Three solid candidates vying for secretary of state

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Three candidates are vying for the Democratic nomination for Oregon secretary of state this year. All three are state senators, and all three have a reputation among Oregon unions as friends of labor. But Kate Brown, Rick Metsger, and Vicki Walker differ in their approaches to a job that most Oregonians are only dimly aware of.

The Secretary of State's office has kept a pretty low profile the last eight years under Bill Bradbury. Secretary of state is in charge of a bundle of state agencies unified by a kind of "good government" mission:

- Elections, which oversees the ballot initiative process and campaign finance reporting;
- Corporations, which processes articles of incorporation;
- Audits, which investigates agencies in all three branches of government to ensure money is spent appropriately; and
- Archives, which stores government records and makes them available to the public.

Secretary of state also is one of three members of the State Land Board, which manages state-owned lands to provide money for

schools. And, if the governor's office becomes vacant, the secretary of state becomes governor until the next election. That's one reason many have viewed the job as a stepping stone to higher office.

The Northwest Labor Press spoke with the three Democratic candidates about their legislative records and about what they would do if elected. [KEZI newscaster Rick Dancer of Eugene is running unopposed for the Republican nomination.]

State Sen. Kate Brown (D-Portland), a family and juvenile law attorney, leads the three in campaign contributions and organizational endorsements, and likely in name recognition. Brown has led the Democratic caucus in the Oregon Senate since 1998, and was Senate Majority Leader in the 2005 and 2007 sessions.

"I want to continue being a champion for working families in my role as secretary of state," Brown told the Labor Press.

Legislative achievements she cites include two laws that passed last year — card-check unionization for public employees and restoring the right of Fire Fighters unions to negotiate over workplace safety — plus Oregon's family medical leave bill, which she helped pass in 1991 as a lobbyist for the Women's Rights Coalition.

Of course, numerous labor-backed bills also died on her watch in the 2007 legislative session, including a bill that would have banned use of tax dollars for union-busting. House Speaker Jeff Merkley got a lot more of labor's core agenda passed in the House, where Democrats led by a one-vote margin, than Senate Majority Leader Brown delivered in the Senate, where Democrats led 18-11. Brown focused much of her political energy on passing laws granting state recognition to domestic partnership and banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

If elected secretary of state, Brown said she wants to do performance audits of all state agencies, asking frontline workers what obstacles there are to doing their jobs, and looking to see if tax dollars are being well spent.

To the union movement, likely the most important part of the secretary of state's job is enforcement of laws governing the initiative process. The union movement has spent enormous money and energy over the years fighting anti-union measures put forth by Bill Sizemore, whose organizations were found by a 2002 jury to have used extensive fraud and forgery to get initiatives on the ballot.

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