

# Building Trades Council stays out of U.S. Senate race

BEND, Ore. — Despite pleas for endorsement from both candidates, the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council (OSBCTC) took no action in a hotly contested race for U.S. Senate.

Both Democratic State Rep. Jeff Merkley and incumbent Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith addressed nearly 100 delegates and guests at OSBCTC's 47th annual convention held Aug. 26-28 at the Riverhouse Conference Center.

On Tuesday, Merkley said he was the best choice for working families, touting his leadership as Speaker of the House that resulted in "the most pro-worker session of the Oregon Legislature that we've seen in three decades."

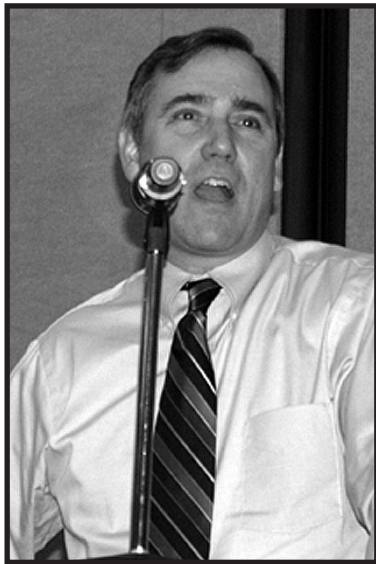
Jobs were created, Merkley said, as a result of large public investments in construction projects for community colleges, universities, K-12 schools, highways and other infrastructure. Workers were protected, he continued, with passage of legislation that clarifies prevailing wage rates on public-private construction projects; that allows workers to apply for unemployment insurance if they are locked out of their jobs in a labor dispute; and that permits public employees to form a union through majority sign-up (card-check).

"Together we got it done," Merkley said. "But Oregon can only go so far if our nation is way off track. And we are way off track."

Merkley said the United States and Oregon have lost millions of good paying jobs as a result of bad trade and tax policies. Oregon alone has shed 70,000 jobs since enactment of the North American and Central American free trade agreements, he said.

Merkley pointed out that Smith supports free trade and tax breaks for the wealthy — and opposes the Employee Free Choice Act.

Smith's positions are polar opposites of Merkley's on these issues. In fact, Smith has voted with President George Bush nearly 90 percent of the



JEFF MERKLEY

time and has teamed with Republican leaders many times on filibusters blocking pro-labor bills such as the Employee Free Choice Act.

Smith made a brief appearance before delegates on Wednesday morning. He had time for only one question following his speech before rushing off to another event. He did not talk about his positions on free trade or the Employee Free Choice Act.

"I have not voted with you 100 percent of the time," he acknowledged. "But I have worked with you 100 percent of the time."

He told delegates that he supports



GORDON SMITH

John McCain for president, prevailing wage laws, and legislation that funds projects that create construction jobs.

"Whether it's light rail, streetcars, whether it's wind, whether it's energy projects, I have been there for you — that counts for something," he said.

Smith told delegates that through his endeavors in the Senate over the past 12 years Oregon has seen 25,000 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars come to the state in the way of highway and construction projects.

In asking for the council's endorsement (which he got six years ago), Smith said it wouldn't be wise "to put

all of your political party interests into one basket."

On Thursday, a motion by the OSBCTC Executive Board to endorse Smith was amended, resulting in a no action for either candidate.

In other political business, the Building Trades Council backed re-election of U. S. Representatives Greg Walden (R-2nd Dist.), Earl Blumenauer (D-3rd Dist.), and Peter DeFazio (D-4th Dist.), and the election of Democrat Kurt Schrader, running for an open seat in the 5th District.

On statewide ballot measures, the council endorsed two of 12 measures that will appear on the November ballot. They are Measure 56, a legislatively-referred constitutional amendment that would allow May and November property tax elections to be decided by a majority vote, rather than a super-majority; and Measure 57, another referral from the Legislature, this one to increase sentences for drug trafficking, theft against the elderly, and specific repeat property and identity theft crimes.

The OSBCTC opposes Measures 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65.

Measure 63 is its major focus. The Bill Sizemore-sponsored measure would exempt some property owners from having to get building, plumbing, electrical or mechanical permits or inspections for improvements valued at or under \$35,000. The council is still

working on its opposition campaign. Delegates authorized the Executive Board to decide how much money to raise to fight it.

For details on all the ballot measures, go to the Labor Press at: [www.nwlaborpess.org/2008/8-15-08BM.html](http://www.nwlaborpess.org/2008/8-15-08BM.html).

Construction jobs, renewable energy, and transportation were major themes at the convention.

OSBCTC Executive Director Bob Shiprack reported that the state's Energy Facility Citing Council, of which he is chair, has several requests in the pipeline to cite new wind, solar, geothermal, and gas turbine projects. He said a subcommittee appointed by Gov. Kulongoski will be recommending to the 2009 Legislature a package of "several hundred million dollars" of bonding, loans, and utility funds for energy efficiency projects.

"It's going to impact literally every craft. We're talking about retrofitting buildings — everything from houses to industrial plants," he said.

Rick Metsger, chair of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee, lobbied delegates for support in investing in Oregon's highway transportation system.

Construction unions fully support building more roads and bridges — how to pay for it is another question. Should there be an increase in the gas

(Turn to Page 4)

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family



Solutions for Life

When You Need Them



9955 SE Washington Street, Portland, OR 97216  
(503) 253-8193 \* (800) 356-6507 ext. 340 for the Loan Department  
[www.ibewuwfcu.com](http://www.ibewuwfcu.com)

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family



(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)  
Established in 1900 at Portland, Oregon  
as a voice of the labor movement.

4275 NE Halsey St., P.O. Box 13150,  
Portland, Ore. 97213  
Telephone: (503) 288-3311

Editor: Michael Gutwig  
Staff: Don McIntosh, Cheri Rice

Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and SW Washington. Subscriptions \$13.75 per year for union members.

Group rates available to trade union organizations.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID  
AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICE: Three weeks are required for a change of address. When ordering a change, please give your old and new addresses and the name and number of your local union.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS, P.O. BOX 13150,  
PORTLAND, OR 97213-0150



25