

In Washington State

Labor-backed candidates make cut in 'Top 2' primary

There were no surprises for organized labor in Washington's Aug. 19 primary. Incumbents outpolled challengers in statewide races, and in some parts of the state, the new "top two" election system will result in candidates from the same party facing off in the November general election.

Voter turnout was low — 37 percent.

The biggest news was that the governor's race was still very close, four years after Democrat Christine Gregoire beat Republican Dino Rossi by less than 400 votes. This time, Gregoire got 48.3 percent of the vote to Rossi's 46.3; voters will choose between them in November.

"[The closeness of the race] reinforces the need for organized labor to get information to our members about why Gregoire is our recommended candidate," said David Groves, spokesperson for the Wash-

ington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO. WSLC is the premier labor federation in Washington, where union households make up roughly a quarter of the electorate.

"Gregoire has been a strong advocate on our issues, including apprenticeship, prevailing wage, and other bread and butter issues," Groves said. "She's successfully made the point that you can have worker-friendly policies and still be employer-friendly," Groves said.

On its Web site, www.wslc.org, the state labor council compares Gregoire's and Rossi's records and positions. The two candidates' campaigns could hardly have been more different: Gregoire's theme was "One Washington," while Rossi supporters blanketed some parts of the state with billboards saying, "Don't let Seattle steal this election."

"We felt that was emblematic of the divisive campaign Rossi is waging," Groves said, "pitting business against labor, Eastern versus Western Washington, and rural vs. urban."

Under the new Top Two system, the primary serves to winnow the field of candidates down to two for the general election, in partisan offices. Non-partisan positions, such as seats on the state Supreme Court, are unaffected.

So far there's no sign that an anti-Republican mood on the national scene is affecting state and local races in Washington: Republicans got the most votes in four of the eight statewide offices up for election.

"Washington voters have an independent streak and don't often vote party line," Groves said. The WSLC supported incumbent Republican Secretary of State Sam Reed. Reed won 59 percent of the primary vote.

In all other statewide partisan races, the WSLC endorsed a Democrat, who advanced to the general election.

Incumbent Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen, a Democrat, polled at 52 percent, more than twice his nearest opponent.

Incumbent Insurance Commis-

sioner Mike Kreidler soared above Republican challenger John Adams.

For state treasurer, WSLC-backed Democrat Jim McIntire polled six percentage points behind Republican Allan Martin, but a third candidate in the race, now eliminated, was also a Democrat and got 15 percent of the vote.

In the race for attorney general, WSLC-backed former Pierce County executive John Ladenburg got 43 percent to incumbent Republican Rob McKenna's 57 percent.

WSLC-endorsed incumbent State Auditor Brian Sonntag, a Democrat, got 59 percent to Republican Dick McEntee's 34 percent.

Republican incumbent Doug Sutherland outpolled WSLC-endorsed Democrat Peter Goldmark for commissioner of public lands.

In the non-partisan race for superintendent of public instruction, WSLC-endorsed incumbent Bergeson got the most votes and will face Randy Dorn in the November general election.

In Southwest Washington, endorsed Democrat Tim Probst, running for House Seat 1 in District 17, captured 48 percent of the vote to Republican runner up Joseph James' 33 percent. A third Republican candidate took 18.5 percent of the vote.

In other 17th District races only

two candidates ran in House Seat 2 and for the Senate, so all will advance to the general election. The same holds true in the 18th District, and for the 49th District Senate and House Seat 2 races. In House Seat 1, Democrat Jim Jacks received 54 percent of the vote to Republican Debbie Peterson's 27 percent. A second Republican captured nearly 15 percent.

In the District 3 congressional race, incumbent Democrat Brain Baird outpolled three challengers with just over 50 percent of the vote. He will face runner-up Michael Delaver, a Republican, in November. Delaver got 20 percent of the vote.

Machinists calls for Boeing strike

Negotiators for the Machinists Union are urging their members to reject a contract offer from Boeing and go on strike Sept. 4. [The vote was scheduled Sept. 3, after this issue went to press.]

Machinists Lodge 63 represents approximately 1,200 workers at the Boeing plant in Gresham. The union held voting at the football field at Mt. Hood Community College. Some 26,000 of the affected workers are in the Puget Sound region, and about 800 work at the defense-aircraft modification plant in Wichita, Kan.

The Machinists Union cited several reasons for rejecting the offer, including the lack of job-security commitments, increases in medical insurance costs, and pay and pension increases that didn't meet expectations.

The union needs a two-thirds' majority vote to strike. In 2002, workers rejected the contract, but failed to get a two-thirds vote to strike. If that happens, the contract is implemented.

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