

# Labor trounces Bill Sizemore proposals ... again

By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

November 4 was a bad night for Bill Sizemore — the most persistent antagonist of the Oregon union movement. Voters rejected all five of his ballot initiatives, and voted yes on a legislative referral that overturned one of his previous initiatives.

Sizemore may have intended to overwhelm Oregon unions with scattershot proposals this year, but union campaigners say the measures ended up energizing and unifying the union movement, and even firmed up organized labor's alliances with other groups.

Labor and its allies put more than \$15 million into an umbrella group, Defend Oregon, that was created to defeat the Sizemore measures and two others sponsored by former Oregon Republican Party Chair Kevin Mannix. Defend Oregon also helped to pass several referrals from the state's Democratic-majority Legislature.

Defend Oregon both pooled resources and divided up some of the work of opposing similar measures. Associated campaigns were formed under the Defend Oregon umbrella to fight specific measures. For example, the Oregon Education Association (OEA) formed Parents and Teachers

Know Better — to fight Measures 58 and 60, the latter of which would have instituted an ill-defined merit system and scrapped cost-of-living increases and seniority rights for teachers. Building trades unions teamed with Realtors and insurance companies and formed Oregonians Against Unsafe Housing to fight Measure 63, which would have allowed home improvements of up to \$35,000 to take place without permits or inspections. Public employee unions formed the Don't Silence Our Voice Committee to fight Measure 64, which would have made it harder for public workers to give to their unions' political campaigns. And the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Service Employees International Union, and OEA contributed to the Better Way to Fight Crime Committee, which opposed Mannix' measures 61 and 62 and supported a legislative referral alternative.

Labor had help in opposing Measure 64. Though the measure was chiefly aimed at politically disarming public employee unions, other non-profit groups felt that the measure's broad language was loose enough to hamstring their fundraising as well. Groups like the Sierra Club and Basic Rights Oregon had a stake in defeating the measure, because both also get do-

nations from state employee workplace giving programs, and they take positions on legislation in Salem. The Oregon Humane Society sent messages out to members and supporters via e-mail and its newsletter.

"Everyone learned that when we do all stick together, we all win together," said Defend Oregon spokesperson Scott Moore.

Defend Oregon worked closely with the Oregon AFL-CIO and with the Change to Win federation, both of which had their own high-intensity po-

litical mobilizations going. From August to Election Day, coalition allies met at least weekly in person or by conference call to coordinate.

Coalition partners, both unions and non-profit groups, worked hard to educate their own members. To be a union member in Oregon was to get friendly phone calls from fellow unionists — until county elections offices recorded their ballot was received.

And the campaign got assists from Democratic candidates. For example, volunteers who went door-to-door dis-

tributing literature for Jeff Merkley's U.S. Senate campaign also distributed Defend Oregon material about ballot measures.

Defend Oregon also used its campaign resources to pay for television ads, direct mail to voters, polling to test how well the messages were getting out, and to hire the door-to-door canvass operation of Working America — the AFL-CIO's community affiliate. In the end, both of the Mannix measures and all five of the Sizemore measures went down to defeat.

## ...Job creation key to any stimulus pact

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gon," emphasizing that transportation construction can provide living-wage jobs.

State and federal estimates show that every \$1 million spent on infrastructure translates into 28 jobs and \$3.2 million in total economic activity.

Wheeler said that an infusion of money would allow Multnomah County to shore up a large portion of the more than 300 miles of roads, streets, curbs and sidewalks that the county is responsible for.

"It will not only put people to

work, it will make that infrastructure safer for everybody in our community to use," he said.

On a larger scale, Wheeler said the county must have federal assistance to rebuild the Sellwood Bridge, the busiest two-lane bridge in the state, carrying more than 30,000 vehicles a day. "We can't rebuild it alone," he stated.

Wheeler said the nearly 100-year-old bridge has replacement parts recycled from projects that are more than 120 years old. Weight limits on the bridge, he continued, have been re-

duced four times, to the point that buses and trucks can no longer cross it. "It is a major transportation liability," he said.

Leonard, a former president of Fire Fighters Local 43, said investing in infrastructure projects is a good strategy for dealing with a recession and rising unemployment. "It will put people back to work who would otherwise be unemployed and taking unemployment," he said. "They will have money in their pocket to go out and buy goods and services — get the economy moving."

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