

Oregon delegates take part in momentous AFSCME conclave

Oregon union delegates had an impact in the 39th international convention of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), held June 27-July 2 in Boston, Massachusetts. Several resolutions that originated in locals of Oregon AFSCME were approved at the convention. And Oregon delegates were vigorous campaigners in the contested race to succeed William Lucy as secretary-treasurer of the 1.5-million-member union.

Local resolutions to win passage will:

- Create a national-level AFSCME body to provide input to AFSCME lobbyists about climate change legislation, and direct that an AFSCME representative be sent to the next international climate talks, which will take place in Mexico City in November;
- Put AFSCME on record opposing any privatization of water sources or delivery systems in the United States [A similar resolution passed at the most recent convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO];
- Create a Green Ribbon Committee of the national union, to make en-

vironmental policy recommendations. Selected to head the committee was Molly Chidsey, a member of AFSCME Local 3580 at the Metro regional government.

Delegate Grant Swanson, Local 88 vice president and a page at Multnomah County library, worked to pass those resolutions, as well as push a fourth resolution encouraging AFSCME to support and do business with union-friendly co-ops. Delegates referred that resolution to the International Executive Board for further study.

The national union office also sponsored a resolution that aims to take Oregon AFSCME's Green Caucus national. The Green Caucus is an affinity group for AFSCME members who are engaged in environmental issues. The convention-passed resolution encourages other councils and locals to form such groups.

The announcement by AFSCME secretary-treasurer William Lucy that he would retire at the close of the convention set off a contested campaign to succeed him. The two candidates were Lee Saunders, assistant to AF-

SCME President Gerald McEntee, and Danny Donohue, an international vice president and head of Civil Service Employees Association, a large New York local. Saunders ran with McEntee's endorsement, and Donohue with Lucy's endorsement.

Supporters of Saunders emphasized his knowledge of Washington, D.C., politics and ability to get AFSCME's agenda passed in Congress. Supporters of Donohue liked his proposal to beef up the efforts of AFSCME's state and local bodies, and his assessment that AFSCME should be less tied to the Democratic Party.

Oregon AFSCME has long had close ties to Lucy, even naming its Portland office after the union leader. Lucy is the founder and long-time president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and was in Memphis when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated there, having come to support striking sanitation workers.

Unsurprisingly, Oregon was solid for Donohue. With roughly 5,000 delegates at the convention, voting strength was calculated based on the number of members they represented. The final tally was 652,660 for Saunders to 648,356 for Donohue — a margin of 4,304 votes.

Oregon AFSCME delegates noted that McEntee is expected to retire as president in two years.



Solidarity Shopping at Fred Meyer

North Portland resident Lucinda Tate drops off a bag of non-perishable food items purchased at the Interstate Fred Meyer store July 8, part of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555's "Freedom Solidarity Shop Week" for non-food employees at Fred Meyer stores who are struggling to secure a new collective bargaining agreement. Joining Tate were Nicole Warren, Jeanine Warren, and Elaine Levier, all parishioners of nearby St. Andrew Catholic Church. "We came out to support members of UFCW in their struggle," said Tate, who co-chairs the Faith-Labor Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice. The event at Interstate Fred Meyer was the fourth stop in a week of "Solidarity Shopping." It started in The Dalles July 5, where non-food employees have been trying to get their first contract since joining the union in November 2007. That was followed by stops in Salem, Albany, and Corvallis. It wrapped up June 9 at Beaverton Fred Meyer. All of the food collected July 8 was donated to the Carpenters Food Bank. In all, more than 2,000 pounds of food was donated to local food banks. "We are asking that Fred Meyer negotiate a fair union contract with a living wage, affordable family health care and a secure pension for all employees," said UFCW President Dan Clay. After the last round of bargaining June 24, Fred Meyer asked for mediation. Clay said job actions will intensify the longer negotiations drag on.



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