

Unions weigh in on Washington primary races

VANCOUVER — Mail ballots went out July 28 in Washington's "top-two" primary election, and must be postmarked by Aug. 17 to be counted. For each race, the top two vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, will advance to the November general election.

In Southwest Washington, unions are contributing money and volunteer time to help endorsed candidates seeking state and local office.

At the top of the ticket, incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray faces real-estate salesman and two-time Republican gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi, and 13 less well known candidates. Murray has a 90 percent COPE (Committee on Political Education) rating from the national AFL-CIO, and is endorsed by the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), while Rossi has a 6 percent AFL-CIO rating from his time in the Washington Legislature. Murray is a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill in Congress that would make it easier for workers to unionize and get a first contract; Rossi opposes the bill. As a legislator, he voted to end cost-of-living increases in the minimum wage, which voters had approved 2-to-1.

Odds are good that Murray and Rossi will be the top finishers, and will battle it out through November.

Other statewide candidates running with endorsements from WSLC include Charlie Wiggins and Barbara Madsen for Washington Supreme Court, and Michael Spearman for Washington Court of Appeals. Madsen and Spearman are running unopposed.

A number of unions have endorsed Vancouver Democrat Denny Heck to replace Washington Third District U.S. Congressman Brian Baird, who is not running for re-election. The race is considered a toss-up by political pundits and is being closely watched by national Democrats and Republicans.

At this point, Heck doesn't have the endorsement of WSLC, but he's expected to get it when the state labor federation meets for its Constitutional Convention in Tacoma Aug. 9-12.

At WSLC's political convention in May, WSLC endorsed Democratic State Sen. Craig Pridemore, but he

dropped out of the race two weeks later.

A Vancouver native, Heck co-founded Intrepid Learning Solutions,

Digital Efficiency, and the TVW public affairs network, (Washington State's version of C-SPAN). He was the 17th District's state representative from 1977 to 1987, House Majority Leader, and then chief of staff to governor Booth Gardner from 1989 to 1993.

Baird has endorsed Heck to succeed him.

Also in the race are peace activist Cheryl Crist, a Democrat from Olympia, two Republicans — Jaime Herrera and David Castillo, and Independent Norma Jean Stevens.

Herrera has a 24 percent WSLC COPE rating for her votes as state representative for the 18th District. Castillo is endorsed by the Washington, D.C.-based conservative group Freedom Works, which advocates Social Security privatization and abolition of the estate tax.

The Third Congressional District includes Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum counties, and most of Skamania and Thurston counties.

Three Southwest Washington Democratic candidates for state representative have labor backing: District 49, Position 2, Jim Moeller; District 17, Position 2, Monica Stonier; and District 18, Position 1, Dennis Kampe. [Several other incumbent Democrats, including Rep. Jim Jacks in District 49, failed to get WSLC's support for re-election because of budget votes opposed by the Washington Federation of State Em-

ployees. Like Heck, Jacks also is expected to get a WSLC endorsement at its Constitutional Convention in Tacoma.]

• Moeller, an incumbent, is considered a solid labor ally, and has a 95 percent lifetime AFL-CIO rating.

• Kampe has a good working relationship with unions, said Shannon Walker, president of the Southwest Washington Labor Council. He is director of the Clark County Skills Center, which provides technical career training to Southwest Washington high school students. Kampe is the only Democrat among the seven candidates in the race.

• Stonier, who teaches language arts and social studies at Pacific Middle School, has been attacked by political opponents for being a union member. Seeking to represent District 17, she faces a Republican and a millionaire business Democrat in the race. The Columbian newspaper backs the other two, editorializing that Stonier "sings pitch-perfect the talking point serenades of ... the teachers' union."

In local races, the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council made several endorsements:

• Tony Golik, an AFSCME member, for Clark County Prosecuting Attorney.

• Jill Johanson Court of Appeals, Division 2, District 3.

Aug. 9 is the deadline to register to vote in the primary.



Mel Conner, a retired business agent/organizer for IBEW Local 48, hoists a political campaign sign for union-endorsed congressional candidate Denny Heck. Digging holes for the sign in the background are from left to right: Butch Lacy, Merle Munger, and Al Bauer. Lacy and Munger also are members of Local 48. Bauer is a former state senator from Vancouver. The crew, captained by Ed Barnes, retired business manager of Local 48, placed 90 Heck signs in Clark County during the last two weeks of July.



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