

Fate of Portland's 'voter-owned elections' in hands of voters

Portland voters will decide in November whether to continue the city's "voter-owned elections" system of campaign finance.

Several labor organizations are supporting the program's continuation, on the grounds that it reduces the influence of big money in local politics. Under voter owned elections, a program launched in 2005, candidates for city office get public funding for their campaigns if they first demonstrate public support by collecting signatures and \$5 donations from 1,000 registered voters. Qualifying candidates for city council and city auditor get \$145,000 for the primary and \$200,000 for the general election. In mayoral races, candidates who collect 1,500 signatures and donations get \$195,000 and \$250,000. In re-



turn for the public funding, candidates agree to limit campaign spending and do no private fundraising.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 is supporting the program's continuation, as is Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 and Portland Jobs With Justice.

"It helps people who work for a living," said Oregon AFSCME Political Director Joe Baessler. "It gives people who don't have means — or a network of rich folks — an opportunity to run."

It also limits how much money is spent in campaigns, even among candi-

dates who don't opt to participate, Baessler said, through a kind of "moral pressure." Baessler is critical of other campaign finance reforms that simply limit contributions but don't distinguish between union and corporate contributions. Portland's voter-owned elections program, on the other hand, gives unions at least one kind of advantage: They — and other membership organizations — are able to muster volunteers.

Voter-owned elections allows candi-

dates to spend more time talking to voters, and less to big donors, Baessler said.

AFSCME and SEIU members turned out Aug. 14 to kick off the campaign with a rally at Dawson Park in North Portland, and then went door-to-door to talk with voters about it. The City ordinance that created voter-owned elections specified that the program was to go before voters for approval after five years.

Machinists, Painters leaders plan series of events in Portland

Machinists General President Tom Buffenbarger will join Painters and Allied Trades International President Jimmy Williams for a "Breakfast with the Candidates" at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 8, at the IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way. There is no charge for the continental breakfast.

Oregon's elected politicians and candidates have been invited to attend, including Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Portland Mayor Sam Adams.

Later that morning, at 11 a.m., the union leaders will join members at Daimler Trucks on Swan Island for a barbecue and rally. Workers there recently ratified a new three-year collective bargaining agreement.

On Tuesday, Sept. 7, Williams will take part in a labor walk and hot dog feed at Firefighters Local 452 Hall, 1807 Fruit Valley Road, Vancouver. From 5 to 7 p.m. union members will

be knocking on doors in the 17th, 18th, and 49th districts for endorsed candidates in Washington.

Williams is on a West Coast "It's about Jobs" bus tour that starts in Seattle on Labor Day. Following the event at Daimler he will leave for California. For more information about the Portland events, call Tim Carrier at 503-257-6644 or Bob Petroff at 503-238-5550.

Open Forum

To The Editor:

At a time when working families across this country are facing a jobs crisis and unprecedented hardships, our partnership with United Way is more valued than ever. For over six decades, AFL-CIO Community Services has worked in national and locally-based partnerships with United Way to serve those in need in our communities.

On behalf of the Executive Board, I am proud to continue the legacy of this

Union members encouraged to support United Way

partnership as executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO. United Way advances the common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all. They focus on education, income, and health — the building blocks for a good quality of life. This is exactly what is needed to help families recover, rebuild, create and strong future.

To achieve this goal, United Way recruits people and organizations who bring the passion, expertise, and re-

sources needed to get things done. Through our partnership, United Way invites you to be part of the social change America needs. You can give, you can advocate and you can volunteer. That's what it means to LIVE UNITED and in the labor movement, we know what living united means. Please join in supporting the 2010 United Way campaign.

Bob Tackett
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
NW Oregon Labor Council

Help available for those touched by cancer

To The Editor:

On Father's Day in Seattle, Washington, I participated in a cancer fundraiser call the LiveSTRONG Challenge — the Lance Armstrong Foundation's top fundraiser event.

It was a five kilometer run. As a first-timer, it was an extremely rewarding sense of accomplishment; a must-add to your bucket list. Next year I plan to participate in the 30-K bike race.

At the event I was also privileged to attend a dinner with donors and volunteers. Speakers, mostly cancer survivors, opened up about their personal

experiences and explained how they didn't know where to get support, where to find the right doctors, and about the exhausting amount of time it took to search.

The keynote speaker, also the president of the foundation and a cancer survivor, gave the message that this year's financial needs had been met and that the only goal remaining was to pass the word on to family and friends.

I feel it is my duty to pass the message on to my extended family and union brothers and sisters. Anyone can get free links to services, financial is-

sues, cancer prevention diets, and access to care by calling 1-866-235-7205 toll-free or going on line at www.live-strong.org.

I would strongly recommend that anyone with cancer or anyone who knows somebody touched by cancer — there are 28 million people living with cancer in the world today — to contact the phone number or access the web site. It can have an impact.

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