

...Voters have clear choice between Heck and Herrera

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tivated by concern about the decline of the American Dream. Heck is putting his own money into the race, and has made rescuing the middle class the heart of his campaign. In interviews and campaign events, he hammers this message.

"I believe the greatest domestic challenge facing America is the creation of family-wage jobs and getting this economy moving," Heck said Sept. 14, kicking off a "Let's Get to Work" jobs tour. In the tour, he's asking business owners what government can do to help their businesses succeed and hire more employees. Heck began the tour at Christensen Shipyards, a Vancouver boat-building company that is branching out to make wind turbines.

Creating jobs has become a moral imperative, Heck said, because a job isn't just about economic security, but about self-respect.

"The American Dream is that our children will do better than we did," Heck said. "That's what's at stake."

Running for office after two decades out of politics, Heck was unknown to many local labor activists. But several long-time labor leaders know him well. Rick Bender, president of the Washington State Labor Council (AFL-CIO), served alongside Heck in the Washington Legislature, and remembers him as an ally on workers' collective bargaining rights and a staunch supporter of school funding. Heck's votes during five terms in office earned him a 72 percent lifetime rating from the state labor council. Heck voted against the use of strikebreakers, for providing unemployment benefits to workers during labor disputes, and for giving collective bargaining rights to groups of public employees. In other cases, he defied the labor council recommendations, voting to limit public employee pensions and the right of individuals to sue when products cause harm.

Ed Barnes, former president of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council and retired business manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, has also known Heck since the 1970s. Barnes' brother worked with Heck's father as Teamsters



Shannon Walker (left), president of the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council, makes a point to Third District Congressional candidate Denny Heck during a Painters Union "It's About Jobs" bus tour stop in Vancouver last month. In the background is Lucy Carrier of the American Federation of Teachers-Washington.

at Vancouver Fast Freight. Like Bender, Barnes describes Heck as smart, honest, even-tempered, "a guy who supports business but also supports labor."

The Columbian has characterized both Heck and Herrera as moderates. Barnes disagrees with the latter.

"If she's a moderate, then George Bush, Karl Rove, and Dick Cheney are screaming liberals," Barnes said.

As chair of IBEW Local 48's Southwest Washington political action committee, Barnes talks to legislators of

both parties. But Herrera, as a state legislator, rebuffed invitations to meet with him to discuss labor's agenda.

Herrera failed to return calls from the Northwest Labor Press. She declined to fill out a Washington State Labor Council questionnaire. She ignored an invitation to appear before the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council to talk about her campaign. She has said she opposes the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill to make it easier for workers to unionize and get a first con-

tract. The bill is labor's top-priority bill in Congress; Heck supports it.

The state labor council rates Herrera at 19 percent for her votes in three legislative sessions. For example, she voted 'no' on a \$45-a-week increase in unemployment benefits, and 'no' on a proposal (since referred to this November's ballot) to put Washingtonians to work doing energy efficiency retrofits in public schools.

Jobs and the economy are big this election year. In Clark County, official unemployment is 13.9 percent.

"What ideas do you have to put people back to work? That's what matters to our people," said Bender.

Heck and Herrera are both talking jobs, but are utterly different in their approach. To get the economy moving again, Heck believes in government investment in green energy, making money available to community banks to loan to small businesses, and extending unemployment benefits to the long-term unemployed. Herrera has made it clear she opposes any government response — except for cutting taxes.

And as a signer of Grover Norquist's "Taxpayer Protection Pledge," she's solemnly bound to oppose any and all tax increases.

Herrera says she's greatly concerned about the federal budget deficit, and even blames the deficit for joblessness, saying the reason businesses of all sizes are afraid to hire is that they fear new taxes they may have to pay in the future

to repay the federal debt. Yet Herrera wants to extend the Bush tax cuts for wealthy taxpayers, which would add to the debt.

Heck wants to extend the Bush tax cuts — but only for taxpayers with incomes under \$250,000 a year. And Heck said a recession is a great time to invest in infrastructure. He's a big advocate of investment in green energy as an alternative to imported oil.

Heck is also an outspoken supporter of building a new bridge over the Columbia River — a high priority for local building trades unions. "We're coming up on the centennial of a bridge that was designed before mass-produced automobiles," Heck said. Building a new bridge, Heck said, will employ 27,500 people in the short term. "That's a shot in the arm. But that's not why we do it. We do it because we need to move people and freight more efficiently in this region if we want to grow our economy."

Heck says if he had been in Congress at the time, he would have voted against the 2008 bank bailout, but for the 2009 stimulus bill. But, similar to a critique some union leaders have made, Heck says the stimulus act wasn't big enough, should have been better targeted to the hardest-hit areas, and should have focused more on infrastructure spending and less on tax cuts. Moreover, Heck said, stimulus funds for infrastructure didn't get spent quickly enough.



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