

Labor vote makes the difference in tight races

Organized labor's get-out-the-vote campaign propelled Democrat John Kitzhaber to the governor's mansion in Oregon. By the narrowest of margins, Kitzhaber, an emergency room doctor who served two terms as governor from 1995-2003, defeated political newcomer Chris Dudley, a former NBA basketball player, 49 percent to 48 percent.

Kitzhaber was endorsed by virtually every labor organization in the state.

According to Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain, labor unions — including community affiliate Working America and Change to Win's Service Employees International Union and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, but not the Carpenters or Teamsters unions — represent the third-largest voting bloc in the state, with 350,000 members. Chamberlain said union families turned out for the midterms at a higher rate than the general population. Unofficially, voter turnout in Oregon was 71 percent. Union family turnout was estimated to be 79 percent.

"Historically, polling after the election reveals that union and Working America families vote for their unions' endorsed candidates 75 percent of the time," Chamberlain said.

Kitzhaber won by fewer than 20,000 votes out of nearly 1.4 million ballots cast.

Labor-endorsed candidates also fared quite well down the ticket.

All of the state labor federation's endorsed federal and statewide candidates won, including Ted Wheeler for state treasurer and Susan Castillo for superintendent of public instruction (in the May primary).

Sen. Ron Wyden will return to a Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate; however, re-elected congressmen David Wu, Earl Blumenauer, Peter DeFazio

(Turn to Page 6)



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25

...Voters punished Dems, but no mandate for GOP

(From Page 1)

the economy and create jobs. It wasn't a mandate for the policies most Republicans campaigned on."

The Hart poll backs up that assertion, because it shows that most voters, even those voting Republican, weren't familiar with the Republican agenda. In the poll, 67 percent said they knew little or nothing about the Republican agenda or plans, as outlined in documents like "A Pledge to America." Even among those who voted for the Republican, 64 percent said they knew little or nothing about the Republican agenda.

And, when asked about several specific proposals Republicans have made, majorities in the poll said they would oppose them:

- 66 percent were against cutting taxes on those making more than \$250,000 a year;
- 67 percent of voters, and 55 percent of Republican voters, were against repealing the recent Wall Street financial regulation law; and
- 88 percent of voters, and 83 percent of Republican voters, were against repealing the part of the health insurance reform that prevents insurance companies from denying coverage to those with pre-existing conditions.

On the other hand, when asked about specific economic proposals that the AFL-CIO has pushed for, majorities said they would support those proposals: 77 percent were in favor of investing in rebuilding roads,

bridges, schools, and energy systems as a way to create jobs, and 65 percent favor continuing federal unemployment insurance benefits for jobless Americans.

And voters were more concerned that Democrats and President Obama have done too much to help banks and Wall Street (43 percent) than that they have imposed too many regulations on business (34 percent).

The second nationwide poll, of 807 AFL-CIO-affiliate union members who voted, demonstrated once again that union members were much more likely than other voters to vote Democratic. For U.S. House races, 64 percent of union members voted for the Democrat, compared with 45 percent for the public at large.

Molyneux said union voters were better informed, and he attributed that to unions contacting members

at home and on the job. Of the union members polled, 74 percent said they got election information from a union newspaper, magazine, or newsletter; 72 percent from a union mailer to their home; 48 percent from a recorded phone call; 37 a live phone call; 25 percent a flier at work; 25 percent from e-mail; 15 percent were contacted by a steward or other member at work; 11 percent visited a union web site, and 8 percent got in-person contact from a union member at home.

But the polls also showed that one group of voters was especially unhappy with the Democrats: the white working class. In the swing district poll, 58 percent of white non-college-educated voters chose the Republican U.S. House candidate; and the figure was 67 per-

cent for white men without a college degree.

Union membership lessened but did not erase the trend: Across the country, 50 percent of white non-college graduate union members voted Republican.

The survey had a margin of error of ±3.5 percentage points. More details of the poll results are available at nwlaborpress.org.

Though the party in charge of the U.S. House will change in January, Trumka said the union agenda will remain the same.

"Our agenda is jobs, jobs, jobs, and we'll be pushing everybody, including the new Republican majority to create jobs. And if they do create jobs, we will stand with them."

'Leave a light on' for your letter carrier

The National Association of Letter Carriers has initiated a safety and customer service campaign. "Leave the Light on For Your Letter Carrier" is a reminder that mail may be delivered after dark this fall and winter.

The Letter Carriers' union wants postal customers to understand that the change from daylight saving time means letter carriers are delivering mail after darkness begins.

Jim Cook, president of Portland-based NALC Branch 82, said "Letter Carriers want to deliver mail earlier for the best customer service possible. However, sometimes we must deliver your mail later and we ask customers to help by keeping dogs restrained and porch lights on where there is door-to-door delivery."

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