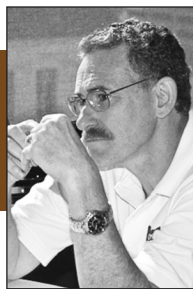


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



On Nov. 2, a Red Tide swept across America fueled by frustration — broken promises of jobs and the growth of a strong, vibrant middle class. But that tide failed to crest the Cascades in the Pacific Northwest and the California Sierras. Political pundits will speak of the West Coast's high union density and the strength of our strong political program and our coalition partners' equally strong political programs.

The foundation of the 2010 AFL-CIO campaign program was simple. Talk to your members, educate them, and give them the information they need to make a choice.

In Oregon, that translated into the Oregon AFL-CIO affiliate volunteers knocking on over 60,000 doors, talking to almost 40,000 members on the telephone, holding 21,000 conversations at the worksite, and distributing over 500,000 pieces of campaign literature.

Oregon AFL-CIO affiliates and Working America represent the third largest voting bloc in Oregon (350,000 members), trailing only the Democratic and Republican parties. Our members turned out to vote eight points higher than the general public.

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

We win in Oregon because we all

work together at election time. When we are focused as a movement on a goal — and work together — we win. We lose when we lack focus or when we are too busy to support each other.

Yes, Oregon stopped the Red Tide this time. But the middle class, and specifically, the progressive movement, lost a national election for control of the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures and governor's mansions across America.

There will be significant ramifications for this loss. Corporate America, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Republican Party all understand that the biggest impediment to stopping any progressive change for America is our union movement.

As a movement, we must prepare for attacks at the federal and state levels. Our brothers and sisters in five Midwest states are in trouble. They now have anti-middle-class elected leaders in control of both legislative houses and the governors' mansions. Their state legislatures are poised to roll back labor law by passing right-to-work legislation. Indiana could vote on such legislation by mid-January. It is predicted that 19 states will introduce legislation that will roll back state prevailing wages. And public employees are fighting a pitched battle in every state to maintain wages, benefits and to slow down lay-offs.

Freshly elected Congressional "tea-baggers" are advocating for

budget cuts to reduce the federal deficit and at the same time continue the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. Success for them equates to a slow-down in job creation and aid to the states who are trying to weather the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

As a union movement, we have two choices: One, we can develop a short-term strategy that focuses on the needs of only our individual members. Or, we can develop a strategy that has us fighting together, a strategy as old as the union movement itself: an injury to one is an injury to all.

Over the next few weeks, the Oregon AFL-CIO will be having a conversation with our affiliates to develop such a collaborative strategy. This same strategy that identified our affiliates' individual interests and developed the 2010 campaign that stopped the Red Tide from sweeping over Oregon can be effective in stopping an anti-worker agenda in Oregon and throughout America.

Who's on our side? The Oregon union movement. And when we work together as a movement we can all be on the side of all middle-class Oregonians.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

...Labor vote gives candidates a boost

(From Page 2)

and Kurt Schrader will have to give up their committee leadership roles because nationally, Republicans picked up 60 seats to take majority control of the House. (Oregon Republican Greg Walden also was re-elected. He was endorsed by the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and Teamsters Joint Council 37.)

Seventy-five percent of the Oregon AFL-CIO's endorsed candidates for state Senate won, as did 70 percent of its state House candidates, including two Republicans. That is significant because the House is split between Democrats and Republicans 30-30.

Democrats will control the Oregon Senate 16-14, and their newly-elected majority leader will be Diane Rosenbaum, a member of Communications Workers of America and a former AFL-CIO Executive Board member.

In local races, Tom Hughes, a former school teacher and two-term mayor of Hillsboro, defeated environmentalist Bob Stacey for president of Metro. With a margin of victory of only 1,017 votes out of nearly 400,000 cast, Hughes got a major boost from having union support, including the Columbia Pacific

Building and Construction Trades Council and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC).

"In a race this close, the union votes he received from union members looking for the jobs-candidate in that race may actually have pushed him over the top," the AFL-CIO said.

Other NOLC-backed winners on Nov. 2 included Ann Lininger for Clackamas County commissioner; Greg Malinowski for Washington County commissioner; Loretta Smith for Multnomah County commissioner; and passage of Multnomah County ballot measures 26-114 (creating a future alternative funding option for the library), and 26-118 (a 5-year operating levy for the Oregon Historical Society).

In Albany, the Linn-Benton-Lincoln Labor Council and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 helped to re-elect Sharon Konopa mayor by knocking on virtually every union-member door in the city. Sharon is married to Steve Konopa, a former Local 555 union official who now works for the Teamsters.

In Washington, the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council helped re-elect Patty Murray to the U.S. Senate,

but fell short in the 3rd District U.S. House race, where Republican Jaime Herrera defeated Denny Heck for the seat vacated by Democrat Brian Baird.

In Legislative races, Democrats Tim Probst (17th Dist.), Jim Jacks (49th Dist.), and Jim Moeller (49th Dist.), were re-elected to their seats in the Washington House of Representatives. All three won by sizeable margins.

Monica Stonier, a member of the Washington Education Association, lost in her bid for a House seat in the 17th District, as did Dennis Kampe in the 18th District. Both are Democrats.

Democrats retained majorities in both the House and Senate.

In Clark County, former AFSCME local union president Tony Golik was elected prosecutor, defeating Brent Boger 55 percent to 45 percent for an open seat. Former Office and Professional Employees Local 11 member Sherry Parker lost her re-election race for county clerk. She was outpolled by Scott Weber by a margin of 50.50 percent to 49.35 percent. Labor-endorsed Steve Stuart was re-elected county commissioner, and Doug Lasher was re-elected county treasurer, but political newcomer Janet Seekins lost her race

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