

# Oregon AFSCME recommits to message of solidarity

EUGENE — At Oregon AFSCME Council 75's convention March 11-13, delegates voted to create a new media fund and to build up the union's political fund. They also elected new officers, and heard reports from Wisconsin and from AFSCME's national leadership. The biennial convention drew 200-plus delegates, alternates and guests to the Hilton Eugene Hotel and Conference Center.

Oregon AFSCME is the statewide council of the 1.5-million-member American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, and represents over 27,000 members employed in state and local government agencies, hospitals and non-profit organizations. About 150 local unions are affiliated from nearly every Oregon county, from 4,000-member Local 328 at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland to three-member Local 1329 at the City of Prineville Railway.

On March 11, convention-goers were joined by hundreds of others to rally 600-strong in solidarity with public workers in Wisconsin who are fighting an effort to strip them of their rights to collective bargaining. Deb Kidney, formerly of AFSCME Local 189 and now a trainer for national AFSCME, told rally-goers about the 10 days she spent in Wisconsin helping the fight-back. Kidney was posted to Green Bay,

where she helped organize a phone campaign to pressure Republican legislators not to vote for the bill. Later, at a mass rally in Wisconsin Feb. 21, she was pressed into service as a security detail for musicians, including Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine.

"Oh my God it was cold," Kidney told the Labor Press. "There were five musicians. They'd sing like two songs and their fingers would freeze up. But it was the most inspiring thing. You can't be part of that and not be moved."

AFSCME International Secretary-Treasurer Lee Saunders told delegates on Saturday that union members in Wisconsin, Ohio and elsewhere can feel the support of members in Oregon.

Oregon AFSCME members have paid \$3 per month into a dedicated Ballot Measure Fund to do battle with anti-union initiatives. Delegates lowered that to \$2.50 and diverted 50 cents to media and political efforts: 30 cents will go to the Council's Political Action Fund, to be used on local elections, and 20 cents will go to a new Media Fund, giving Oregon AFSCME the ability to purchase advertising to promote members and the work they do.

Delegates also voted to cap the Oregon AFSCME Strike Fund at \$1 million. Whenever the Strike Fund reaches that amount, the 20 cents per month that funds it will go toward the Media Fund.



**Instantaneous solidarity:** On Day Two of its biennial convention, Oregon AFSCME drafted delegates for an impromptu phone bank to aid fellow public employee union members in Wisconsin. Public employees there face an all-out assault on their collective bargaining rights. Oregon AFSCME convention delegates (like Matt Hilton and Michael Stewart of OHSU Local 328, above) were given lists of Wisconsin voters, and used their cell phones to call them from the convention floor, urging them to contact their Wisconsin state legislators to oppose the attacks.

"We get a lot of queries from members as to why we don't do more to tell our story," Oregon AFSCME Public Affairs Director Don Loving explained. Now, Loving said, the union will be able to augment "earned" media with

paid ads in print, radio, television, and on billboards.

Delegates also elected the statewide officers of Oregon AFSCME. Gary Gillespie, a City of Eugene library aide, won election to a sixth two-year term as

president, defeating corrections worker Tina Turner-Morfit. Michael Hanna, a database administrator at Multnomah County (and president of Local 88), was elected as first vice president, defeating incumbent Cj Mann of Local 3267 (Lane County Housing and Community Services Agency). Incumbent Bryan Branstetter of Local 3361 (Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution) ran unopposed for second vice president, and Marcie Jo Carlton of Local 328 (OHSU) ran unopposed for secretary, succeeding Janice Larkin of Local 2831 (Lane County) who retired after holding the office 20 years. Incumbent Jeff Klatke of Local 3135 (Housing Authority of Portland) also ran unopposed, for treasurer.

Elections also took place for the Executive Committee, which meets monthly to direct Oregon AFSCME. Voting members include the five statewide officers above, plus 11 vice presidents representing each of seven employer sectors and each of Oregon's five Congressional districts.

Oregon AFSCME has a larger Executive Board that meets quarterly, with about 75 members elected proportionally, roughly on the basis of membership of the locals.

For complete election results, go to Oregon AFSCME Council 75's web site at [www.oregonafscme.com](http://www.oregonafscme.com).

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