

Labor recommends 'yes' vote to renew the Multnomah County Library levy

In Multnomah County, union members and their families are urged to vote "yes" to renew a library funding levy on the May 15 primary ballot.

AFSCME Local 88, which represents workers at Multnomah County, is trying to get the word out about the need to pass the levy — Ballot Measure 26-125 — which funds one of the most popular public libraries in the nation. Multnomah County library ranks number one in circulation among U.S. libraries serving fewer than 2 million

people. Not only that, but as Local 88 points out, it's one of the few places laid-off and unemployed people can go to search for work using Internet access at free computer stations.

The property tax levy would raise about \$34 million a year to operate the Multnomah County Library, which represents about 65 percent of the library's budget. Voting "yes" does not raise property taxes; rather, it extends the current levy of 89 cents per \$1,000

of assessed value. Voting "no" would eliminate that funding, and thus cause the closure of most library branches, and cuts in hours of operation of those remaining.

Even with the levy's passage, the library isn't fully funded, but the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners plans to refer to voters a proposal for a library funding district; that would be on the ballot in November, if voters approve the levy's extension in May.

...Portland City Council race

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like scrappers," said UFCW Local 555 Secretary-treasurer Jeff Anderson. Local 555 also likes that Fritz is an expert on land use rules, which could make a difference if the union finds itself opposing Walmart expansions. Anderson questioned Nolan's acceptance of a \$5,000 contribution from Walmart, which is a notoriously anti-union company.

The contribution was for a legislative race, not City Council, Nolan ex-

plains, and came after she worked with Walmart on a legislative proposal having to do with recycling. Nolan said she made it clear, when she accepted the contribution, that she continued to disagree with them on land use practices and labor practices.

Nolan criticizes Fritz, meanwhile, for refusing to take contributions from unions; Fritz says she won't take money from corporations or from political action committees either, and limits individual donations to \$50. "That's an interesting stance for a union member to take," Nolan told the Labor Press. "I believe unions ought to be able to pool their resources in order to improve their ability to influence political issues."

Both candidates support public campaign finance, but say Portland's

Voter-Owned Elections system would need to be improved, and get voter approval, before returning. Fritz is the only non-incumbent candidate elected using the system — which narrowly failed to win voter support in 2010. She says she hopes to bring it back in modified form by citizen initiative in 2014.

Neither candidate is gung ho about the Columbia River Crossing project in total, but both say there are pieces of it that should move forward, including a local access bridge to Hayden Island to reduce traffic along that stretch of I-5.

Fritz is also skeptical about the need for more industrial land on West Hayden Island, and suggested in some ways it would be better for such development to take place in Vancouver, where a jobs/housing imbalance contributes to commuter gridlock.

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