

Starr says he'll lower prevailing wages as labor commissioner

Bruce Starr, a candidate for Oregon labor commissioner, told a gathering of Clackamas County Republicans last March that he will lower state prevailing wage rates if elected in November.

Starr is a five-term Republican state senator from Hillsboro running against incumbent Brad Avakian for the non-partisan position of commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). Avakian is finishing his first term in the post.

In an audio tape obtained by the Labor Press, Starr asserts that prevailing wage rates in Oregon "are completely out of whack" with market rates in construction.

"There is a way that the labor commissioner can, without going to the governor and asking permission, without going to the Legislature and asking for permission, to bring those prevailing wage rates more in line with the market rates and ultimately save every taxpayer in the state of Oregon dollars,"

Starr said.

The Oregon Prevailing Wage Rate law applies to non-federal public works projects that exceed \$50,000. For

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workers, it establishes the minimum wage to be paid for the particular type of construction work performed. Moreover, it levels the playing field for construction contractors bidding on public projects, while assuring taxpayers that they're getting quality workmanship at a fair price.

Prevailing wage laws are adminis-

tered and enforced by BOLI and are based on quarterly surveys conducted by the Oregon Employment Division.

The wage rates for 2011, for exam-

ple, reflect almost 900,000 hours of work performed by construction workers in over 50 craft occupations during four pre-selected weeks of construction activity in the previous 12 months. Data were collected in 14 geographical regions specified in the state law.

"It's a non-biased, fair reflection of the actual work that is being per-

formed," said John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council. "To say that prevailing wage rates are out of whack is simply wrong. The surveys reflect the market."

The Oregon State Building Trades Council has endorsed Avakian for re-election.

The revelation of the audio tape comes on the heels of Starr telling a conservative radio talk show that, if elected labor commissioner, he will endeavor to make Oregon a "right-to-work" state. That radio interview took place just weeks after Starr appeared before the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council convention, where he told a roomful of union construction officials: "We've had a good relationship over the last 10 years. We are friends. I'm not walking into enemy territory here today."

Mohlis said Starr's remarks on right-to-work and prevailing wage rates

surprised him. "It's not in sync with what I thought his views were," he told the Labor Press last month. "It shows more urgency to re-elect Avakian. It's certainly not in our best interest to have a labor commissioner who is anti-labor."

In Portland mayoral race, Fire Fighters #43, Police Association withdraw endorsements for Smith

Portland Fire Fighters Association Local 43 and the Portland Police Association (PPA) have withdrawn their endorsements of Portland mayoral candidate Jefferson Smith.

The announcement was made in a joint press release Oct. 11 — less than two weeks after Willamette Week reported on a 1993 altercation Smith had with a woman while he was a student at the University of Oregon. The woman required medical treatment and Smith agreed to sign a diversion agreement admitting he was wrong and paid the woman's medical bills to avoid prosecution.

"As you have likely seen unfolding in the press recently, there have been numerous events in Mr. Smith's personal life that raise serious questions about his integrity, honesty, and fitness for office," Fire Fighters Local 43 said in a written statement. "To be clear, we support Mr. Smith's platform, and were we looking solely at candidates' positions on firefighter issues, the endorsement would stand.

"In this situation, however, the candidate's character clearly runs counter to our values. Quite simply, we do not take lightly the respect we all share as firefighters in this community and cannot stand alongside someone with questionable ethics and decision-making skills."

Neither the Fire Fighters nor the PPA endorsed Smith's opponent for mayor, former city commissioner Charlie Hales.

Daryl Turner, president of the PPA, said, "Our members count on us to make recommendations and, at this point in the campaign, we cannot make a strong recommendation for either

candidate."


Organized labor is split on endorsements. Smith is still backed by two other City worker unions — AFSCME Local 189 and Laborers Local 483 — as well as the Portland Association of

Teachers, Communications Workers of America Local 7901, and the Oregon, Southern Idaho District Council of Laborers.

Hales has endorsements from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757, Op-

erating Engineers Local 701, Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, Service Employees International Union locals 49 and 503, Teamsters Joint Council 37, and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

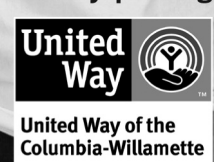
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Columbia-Pacific Building & Construction Trades Council Endorsements for the Nov. 6 General Election

OREGON

CITY OF PORTLAND

Commissioner #1
MARY NOLAN

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

Chair
CHARLOTTE LEHAN

Commissioner #4
JAMIE DAMON

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Commissioner #1
EARL FISHER

PORTLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT BOND MEASURE 26-144

SUPPORT

STATEWIDE

BALLOT MEASURE 82 SUPPORT

BALLOT MEASURE 83 SUPPORT

WASHINGTON

U.S. Senate
MARIA CANTWELL

Governor
JAY INSLEE

Attorney General
BOB FERGUSON

STATE SENATE

TIM PROBST- LD #17
ANNETTE CLEVELAND- LD #49

STATE HOUSE

MONICA STONIER- LD #17/1
JIM GIZZI- LD #17/2

SHARON WYLIE- LD #49/1
JIM MOELLER- LD #49/2

BALLOT MEASURE 1185 - NO

BALLOT MEASURE 1191 - NO

CLARK COUNTY

Commissioner #1
JOE TANNER

C-TRAN PROPOSITION 1 - NO

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