

Party platform shows GOP turning sharply against unions

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

Once upon a time, the national conventions of American political parties were momentous affairs, because the outcomes were undetermined: Delegates decided there who to nominate for president, and debated what would go in the party platform — the document that says what the party intends to accomplish.

Today, primaries determine ahead of time who gets the nomination, and while parties still publish platforms, candidates are in no way bound by them. Few voters read platforms any more, and few party activists know in

detail what they say. And yet, platforms are useful indicators of what a party stands for.

Unfortunately for the union movement, this year's 62-page Republican Party platform, approved in Tampa, Florida, is much more hostile to unions and the labor movement than it was four years ago. In fact, the Republicans are now publicly on record opposing union rights and standards that have stood for 80 years. Meanwhile, the 32-page Democratic Party platform, adopted at the Sept. 4 convention in Charlotte, N.C., affirms worker rights, but sends a mixed message on trade.

GOP NOW OPENLY HOSTILE TO UNIONS

Under the heading of "Freedom in the Workplace," the Republican platform accuses the Obama Administration of "clinging to antiquated notions of confrontation and concentrating power in the Washington offices of union elites."

The platform criticizes the president for supporting project labor agreements (PLAs), claiming it prevents most construction contractors from competing for work on stimulus projects.

The platform commits to put an end

(Turn to Page 11)

...Labor looks to its own ranks for candidates

(From Page 1)

the OEA as a shop teacher at Parkrose School District and later David Douglas High School. He's now running unopposed in Portland's Democratic-leaning District 48 after defeating incumbent Mike Schaufler, a former member of the Laborers Union, in the May primary.

• **Chris Gorsek**, a member of the Mt. Hood Community College Faculty Association, an affiliate of the OEA, is running as a Democrat in east Multnomah County's House District 49. Gorsek is a former cop and past member of the Portland Police Association.

These candidates, if elected, would join as many as 15 current and former union members in the Oregon Legislature, including six who are thought of as being part of an informal "labor caucus" and nine others who have at one time been union members. In the Oregon House, that includes: **Jeff Barker** (D-Aloha), a retired police officer and former president of Portland Police Association; **Michael Dembrow** (D-Portland), a PCC-Cascade writing instructor and past president of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 2277; **Paul Holvey** (D-Eugene), a staff member at the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters; **Greg Matthews** (D-Gresham), a Gresham firefighter and member of IAFF Local 1062; and **Brad Witt** (D-Clatskanie) a staff representative at United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 and former secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Five other state House representatives are past union members. **Margaret Doherty**, (D-Tigard) was a member and later on staff at Oregon Education Association (OEA), and **Betty Komp**, (D-Woodburn), is a former teacher and OEA member. **Mitch Greenlick** (D-Portland) a retired part-time sociology professor, helped found the union local at Portland State University in the 1980s. **Nancy Nathanson**, (D-Eugene) is a University of Oregon librarian and former member of Service Employees

International Union (SEIU) Local 503. **Carolyn Tomei** (D-Milwaukie) is a one-time AFT member.

In the Oregon Senate, **Diane Rosenbaum** (D-Portland) is a labor caucus of one, as former vice president of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901 and past president of the labor caucus at the National Conference of State Legislatures. But three other state senators also have some past union affiliation: **Mark Hass**, (D-Beaverton) was a long-time member of American Federation of Television & Radio Artists (AFTRA) as a reporter at KATU-TV. **Laurie Monnes Anderson** (D-Gresham), a retired registered nurse, was a member of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). And **Chip Shields** (D-Portland) has maintained AFT membership since having taught criminal justice classes at Portland State University.

Two Oregon union members are also running for Congress this year, though not expected to win. Heavy equipment operator **Delinda Delgado-Morgan**, a member of Operating Engineers Local 701, is running as a Republican against Democrat Suzanne Bonamici in Oregon's First Congressional District. The District has been in Democratic hands since 1974. Bonamici outpolled Republican Rob Cornilles in the Jan. 31, 2012 special election to win the seat vacated by David Wu. And TriMet bus driver **Ronald Green**, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757, won the Republican primary and is challenging Third District incumbent Democrat Earl Blumener, criticizing his votes for several NAFTA-style trade agreements.

Union members are also stepping forward for local office:

• **Amanda Fritz**, a member of the Oregon Nurses Association, is seeking re-election to the Portland City Council.

• **Mary Nolan**, who is challenging Fritz, was a union member with the City of Portland Professional Employees Association (COPPEA) when she

was a city planner.

• Firefighter **Doug Breidenthal**, past president of IAFF Local 3340 and former chair of the Jackson County Republican Party, is running for Jackson County Commission, a non-partisan office.

• **Jake Carter**, a member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 125, is running for a seat on the board of directors of the Columbia River Public Utilities District.

• Firefighter **Bryan Adams**, a graduate of the Oregon Labor Candidate School, is running for Sandy City Council.



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