



NORTHWEST

LABOR
PRESSVolume 113
Number 21
November 2, 2012
Portland, Oregon

Clackamas County becomes an electoral battleground

Labor mounts ground game after foes pour money into county races

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

Clackamas County is like Oregon in miniature: It has urban areas like Oregon City and Clackamas Town Center, affluent suburbs like Lake Oswego and West Linn, and small towns like Estacada and Mulino. It's Oregon's third most populous county, with 380,000 people — one in 10 Oregonians — calling it home. And its economy runs the gamut from heavy manufacturers like Precision Castparts and Oregon Ironworks to farming, logging, and tourism.

So what happens in Clackamas County matters a great deal to the rest of the state, says Oregon's top labor union official — AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. And right now, Chamberlain says, "What's happening in Clackamas County is scary."

Chamberlain said the state labor federation is backing the Northwest Oregon Labor Council on Clackamas County races — after several long-time statewide foes of labor put hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars into defeating a pair of incumbents on the county commission.

John Ludlow, a real estate broker and former mayor of Wilsonville, has raised a quarter of a million dollars for his challenge to union-endorsed incumbent County Chair Charlotte Lehan. [By contrast, former Clackamas County chair Lynn Peterson spent less than \$37,000 on her successful 2008 campaign.] The majority of Ludlow's contributions — \$155,343 as of Oct. 29 — are from Oregon Transformation Project PAC. That group, headed by Oregon Republican Party treasurer Rob Kremer, has so far received \$370,000 from Loren Parks, Nevada millionaire and longtime funder of anti-union ballot measures; \$100,000 from Karl R. Miller, CEO of the Avamere nursing home chain; and \$630,000 from Stimson Lumber, whose CEO Andrew Miller is one of the group's leaders.

Oregon Transformation Project PAC is also backing former Republican state representative Tootie Smith in her challenge to incumbent Clackamas County Commissioner Jamie Damon.

"If the 1 percent gets a toehold there, and gets control of the county, they're going to use that as



Clackamas County Chair Charlotte Lehan (left) signed a labor-backed resolution last January that calls on the county to prioritize local source hiring and family wage jobs when letting contracts. To her left is Commissioner Jamie Damon. Corporate interests, some from out of state, are pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into defeating Lehan and Damon in November.

their launching pad to turn Oregon," Chamberlain said. "Their goal is to make Multnomah County an island."

In fact, part of Ludlow's and Smiths' message is an appeal to keep the county from becoming

more like Portland. "Protect Clackamas County from Portland creep," said billboards put up by the PAC in the spring.

Since 2010, Clackamas County voters have rejected an auto registration fee to pay for an upgrade to the Sellwood Bridge; barred the creation of new urban renewal districts without a public vote; and barred spending new funds on light rail without a public vote. Ludlow in particular was a supporter of those campaigns (with much of the funding coming from Parks, Stimson and the Oregon Transportation Project PAC), and that helped him come in first in a four-way primary in May.

But Chamberlain calls their argument a hoax: "I think these folks are trying to bamboozle the citizens of Clackamas County. They're trying to instill fears of 'Portland creep' in areas of the county where that will never happen."

Under state land use law, development in the Portland metro area is limited outside an Urban Growth Boundary, to preserve farm and forest land and prevent sprawl. The boundary currently extends to Oregon City and Damascus, and it has grown only by relatively

(Turn to Page 8)

Construction workers find jobs building 'the cloud' in Central Oregon

By **STEFAN OSTRACH**
Special Correspondent

PRINEVILLE — Remember floppy disks and zip drives? As computer technology develops, the trend is away from storing digital data on a PC or laptop. Tablets like the iPad and netbooks don't even come with hard drives. Digital photos, e-mails, and data files — even software and backups — are more and more likely to be stored "in the cloud."

The term "cloud computing" wasn't even coined until 2006. But the computer cloud is not up in the sky. It's on the ground in massive buildings filled with computer servers. The buildings are called data centers.

Oregon, east of the Cascades, is becoming one of the world's prime locations for these data centers. And no city is experiencing a bigger data center building boom than Prineville. Located in the heart of Oregon in Crook County, Prineville has important attractions for Internet infrastructure companies: the dry climate of the high desert (sunny days, low humidity, and cool nights), cheap and reliable electric power, avail-

able land, and tax breaks.

Central Oregon also has a highly trained and available unionized construction workforce.

Facebook was in Prineville first, buying 124 acres of sagebrush- and juniper-covered land in 2009. It is now completing its second 330,000-square-

foot data center at the location. A third, smaller building is planned, and there is room for at least one more large data center. Facebook's capital spending on

the first building alone brought \$24.4 million in direct local economic activity.

Apple acquired 160 acres of land across the street from Facebook, and recently broke ground on a 338,000-square-foot, 100 percent green, data storage complex. A 10,000 square-foot modular server array has already been built at the location. Apple reportedly has plans to invest more than \$250 million and the site could build as many as 14 additional data halls.

All of the Facebook construction, with the exception of excavation, has been done with union labor. More than 2,500 people have worked at the site, with 50 percent hired locally and the other half coming from elsewhere in Oregon.

Apple also is using union contractors.

David Burger, executive secretary of the Central Oregon Building Trades Council, said union crafts on the high tech projects include IBEW Local 280, Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, Iron Workers

(Turn to Page 5)



This 330,000 square foot, union-built Facebook data center is located in Central Oregon's Prineville. Data center construction is booming in Central Oregon, creating hundreds of good-paying union jobs. (Photo by Alan Brandt)