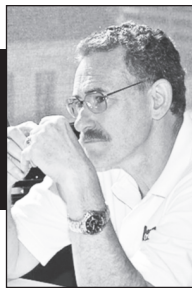


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



One would think that the first three words of our Constitution, "We the people," would mean just that: we the people. But corporations have been considered a part of "We the people" for almost 100 years. And since 2010, they have had no limits, thanks to the United States Supreme Court, even on the amount of funds they could contribute to a political campaign. The 2012 election was, in many ways, a battle between we, the people, the middle class, elderly, and the poor, and the power that an expanded definition of "We the People" gives to the wealthy elite and their corporations. Pundits for months predicted that in the end Mitt Romney would become president by the sheer force of a tsunami of cash.

The pundits were wrong. They were wrong because they didn't understand the power of we, the people, talking to people. They didn't understand that we, the people, are the folks who showed up and staffed phone banks, went door to door talking to our neighbors, talked to our co-workers and family and friends. What you can't buy is the connection, dedication, and conviction that only comes from those who understand and can articulate the issues on a personal level.

In Oregon grassroots efforts were broad and deep. The involved

leadership from AFSCME, Our Oregon, OEA, SEIU, the Democratic Party of Oregon and Planned Parenthood, just to name a few. In Oregon, we, the people, suited up and showed up to fight an onslaught of cash. And we, the people, packed the halls of the Oregon Labor Center night after night, making 315,000 telephone calls, knocking on over 115,000 doors, delivering 359,500 pieces of mail, three- to four-hour-shifts at a time. We, the people, got up at o-dark thirty to talk to workers and deliver almost 10,000 worksite fliers.

We the people were the transgender UNITE-HERE member who showed up night after night to call workers across the state, recruiting co-workers and friends to help too. We the people were the out of work Painter whose son was about to leave for Afghanistan but who made the time to phone bank or canvass day after day. We the people were the scores of school workers who, after working an eight-hour day, came and worked another four hours talking to Oregon voters five days a week for over eight weeks. We the people are the members of the Oregon AFL-CIO who agreed to fund the biggest ground game our federation has ever had. We the people are Working America, whose canvassers en-

thusiastically went door to door throughout the Willamette Valley educating voters with patience and professionalism. We the people are the staff of the Oregon AFL-CIO who often work seven days a week 10- to 14-hour days, who were up early at the worksites and closed down the phone banks late at night. There are no "ifs, ands, or buts": We won this election by sheer numbers, dedication and courage. Unions overcame a cash tsunami with a tsunami of we the people.

We the people really are the workers. We are the glue that holds America together, the fuel that turns the largest economy in the world. Who won this election? The folks who take care of us when we are sick, who get electricity to our homes and workplaces, who build the roads, bake our bread, make our government function and educate our kids. We are the people. The workers of America proved in this election that together we are the mightiest force in this country. I'm honored to have you on my side.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

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Labor law conclave set Feb. 1

Mark your calendars for Friday, Feb. 1, date of the 17th annual Oregon Labor Law Conference at the IBEW Local 48 hall in Northeast Portland.

The conference is designed for business managers, business agents and union officers, to provide information that will help them do their jobs better and to help avoid legal liability.

In addition to classes on basic grievance handling, progressive discipline, family medical leave, workers' comp, and Social Security, this year will feature a segment on how to use social media in organizing, as well as when and how employers can discipline employees for using social media.

Additionally, there will be a class on negotiating health care benefits under Obamacare, and another on workplace

bullying.

Guest speakers include Ronald Hooks, director of the National Labor Relations Board, NLRB 19, and Paul Gamson, outgoing chair of the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

The conference is sponsored by IBEW Local 48, Oregon AFL-CIO, Northwest Oregon Labor Council, the Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon, the Oregon and Columbia-Pacific building and construction trades councils, and the Center for Worker Rights.

For registration information, go to www.laborlawconference.com or contact Norman Malbin at 503 889-3669 or Norman@IBEW48.com; or Kristi Straight at 503-889-3660 or Kristi@IBEW48.com.

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