

Homecoming for national AFL-CIO's Liz Shuler

BEND — At the Oregon AFL-CIO Convention, the national AFL-CIO was represented by Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer.

“It’s great to be home,” Shuler told convention delegates. Shuler is a native Oregonian who now works in Washington, D.C. In a plenary address, she shared her family’s personal story with convention delegates.

Her dad grew up in an orchard, living in a pickers shack with four siblings. At age 12, he was sandblasting tomb stones to make money. When he reached the age of majority, he joined the Marine Corps, and went to Vietnam. On return, he got a job as a hole-digger at the power company — Portland General Electric. It was there that a union — International Brotherhood of Elec-



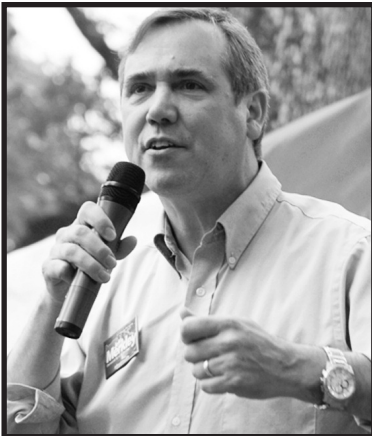
trical Workers Local 125 — enabled him to earn a decent living. He was able to get into the union lineman apprenticeship program, buy a home, raise a family and retire.

Then the Enron fraud and bankruptcy destroyed his 401(k). Shuler

teared up as she described her father and her family’s friends, linemen, lost their dream of a secure retirement.

“In one generation our family had built the American Dream, and it was ripped away,” Shuler said.

— DON MCINTOSH



U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY

...AFL-CIO backs Merkley for re-election

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agreements, said Merkley: “I will not support any trade agreement that creates an un-level playing field and strips jobs from the United States of America.”

Immediately after, delegates voted an early endorsement in Merkley’s 2014 campaign for re-election to the U.S. Senate.

One of the convention’s most rousing speeches came from Weingarten, the national AFT leader, who spoke of sustained attacks on teachers and public education, and of AFT’s plans to build unionism in Texas. The Oregon Nurses Association’s move to join AFT earlier this year made Weingarten’s union the most numerous within the Oregon AFL-CIO: Of the 111,000 workers in Oregon AFL-CIO affiliated unions, roughly 41,000 belong to AFT affiliates.

LABOR HEROES

At its 2013 convention, the Oregon AFL-CIO singled out a handful of individuals and groups for special recognition. Here are some of them.

Oregon AFL-CIO Legislator of the Year: State Rep. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland). Dembrow is a Portland Community College writing instructor who helped his fellow faculty unionize and went on to become a longtime leader within the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Now in his third House term, he’s part of the House Democratic leadership as assistant majority leader for policy. In the 2013 legislative session, he sponsored and led passage of HB 3342, the Oregon AFL-CIO’s priority legislation, which requires managers to remain neutral when state and local government workers consider whether to unionize.

Oregon AFL-CIO Freshman Legislator of the Year: State Rep. Jennifer Williamson (D-Portland). Williamson was the only first-term legislator to hold a 100 percent voting record on AFL-CIO recorded bills in 2013.

Largest public sector organizing win: AFT-Oregon, for using card-check legislation that AFL-CIO won in 2007 to help 1,900 University of Oregon faculty unionize.

Largest private sector organizing win: Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757, for unionizing 160 employees of First Transit, which operate TriMet lift service for the elderly and disabled.

Individual most involved in Oregon AFL-CIO’s 2012 electoral campaign effort: Robert Camarillo, organizer for Iron Workers Local 29.

Organization most involved in Oregon AFL-CIO’s 2012 electoral campaign effort: Oregon School Employees Association, with 20 members taking a leave of absence from their jobs to work on political campaigns.

Greatest efforts to reach workers at the job in Oregon AFL-CIO’s 2012 electoral campaign effort: Jodi Guetzloe-Parker, executive secretary-treasurer, Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council.

“Small But Mighty” award for greatest percentage of members involved Oregon AFL-CIO’s 2012 electoral campaign effort: Iron Workers Local 29, with over 10 percent.

Weingarten said with its community alliance resolution, the national AFL-CIO is looking to leverage the power of a declining union membership by finding “agendas that unite people in the community with the people we represent.”

“We have to do things differently if we’re going to turn around the country,” Weingarten said. “America *can* be turned around with a collective voice, when we have the strength of the community together.”

Resolved, that the Oregon AFL-CIO will ...

Resolutions passed at the 2013 Oregon AFL-CIO convention direct the state federation to do the following:

- Become a member of Health Care for All Oregon coalition, support its mission of creating a publicly-funded health care system serving everyone in Oregon, and ask affiliates to make its campaign a priority in their legislative programs.
- Identify model contract language for unions to adapt to the new health care landscape and affirm support for single-payer health insurance legislation as the solution to the problems of employer-provided health insurance.
- Oppose new laws or reforms that would allow fewer restrictions on the contracting out of public sector jobs.
- Support sweatshop-free state procurement, and join in the global fight to restore the dignity of the old adage of “look for the union label.”
- Defeat a proposed initiative that would count existing hydroelectric dams toward the requirement that investor-owned utilities get 25 percent of their power from new renewable energy resources by 2025.
- Take a look at the effect of moves by school districts to require non-nurses to perform invasive medical procedures in school settings.
- Work with the “Everybody Benefits Coalition of Oregon” to look at the merits of a statewide paid sick days policy.
- Work to amend current state education policy to include completion of union apprenticeships as equivalent to an associates degree in the state’s “40/40/20” education goals.
- Urge policymakers in Oregon and Washington to begin construction as soon as possible on a scaled-down Columbia River Crossing project that includes a light rail component.
- Call on the governor, state legislators, and members of Congress to support permitting and construction of the Jordan Cove liquid natural gas export terminal in Coos County, and encourage the developer to minimize environmental effects beyond the construction phase.
- Implement a political, field and communications program to defeat anti-worker measures on the 2014 ballot.
- Support United Mine Workers in its battle against efforts by bankrupt Peabody spinoff Patriot Coal to shed its union contract obligation to provide health and retirement benefits to 22,000 active and retired mine workers.
- Send a letter to all sitting City of Portland Commissioners and the Mayor supporting the District Council of Trade Unions in its campaign for a contract at the City of Portland.
- Oppose formation of a water district in the City of Portland, and discourage members from signing the initiative petition.
- Try to make sure gender-neutral bathrooms are available at conferences, conventions and other events whenever possible, and recommend that affiliate unions provide gender-neutral bathrooms at their halls so that transgender and gender-non-conforming people feel welcome.
- Encourage all union contracts to bar discriminatory health care exclusions directed toward transgender employees and dependents.
- Create a Working America Center, a community center for workers, providing services, education, and a meeting place to plan action, and connect unorganized workers to the labor movement through Working America Health Care, a gateway for workers to use the health exchange.
- Encourage affiliated local unions to aid the Northwest Labor Press in fulfilling its mission, by subscribing members, purchasing ads, and making use of the Labor Press to get reports of each union out to the wider labor movement.
- Oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership as long as they’re poised to support the wealthiest 1 percent rather than shared gains from trade, call for negotiating sessions to be opened up, oppose so-called Fast Track, and question candidates for office on their trade policy positions.
- Lobby for the passage of Senate Bill 316/House Bill 630, which would end the requirement that the U.S. Postal Service pre-fund health care benefits for future retirees, re-establish overnight delivery standards for first-class mail, protect six-day delivery; and allow the USPS to develop new products and services that would generate new sources of revenue.
- Support reauthorization of the 1965 Older Americans Act. which provides for senior services.
- Oppose voter suppression laws, ensure the voting rights of all Americans, and protect the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- Support President Obama’s proposal to make high quality preschool available to all children in America.
- Support legislation to increase the federal minimum wage to a living wage and index it to increases in the Consumer Price Index.
- Support efforts, in response to the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision, to amend the Constitution to ensure that there is no doubt that the First Amendment refers to people and not corporations.