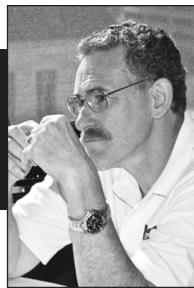


# Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



The Oregon AFL-CIO is putting up a new "Help Wanted" sign this week.

**WANTED:** Elected leaders that put the needs of all Oregonians above patrician politics, above corporate interests, above what is politically expedient, and above dodging issues because they may threaten your re-election.

On Feb. 28, union leaders from across the state will meet and discuss who to endorse for legislative, statewide and federal positions for the May primary election. It will be a lively debate.

The stakes are high for Oregon workers — for our state's middle class. Whether it is the development of West Hayden Island or construction of the Columbia River Crossing (projects that will create thousands of jobs, update decaying transportation infrastructure that enable farmers and manufacturers from Ashland to Baker to get their goods to markets) we need politicians who commit to expanding our economy.

Whether it is trade agreements that have wiped out tens of thousands of Oregon jobs, or the most recent federal Farm Bill that cuts billions of dollars from food assistance for the poor, or turning a blind eye to the plight of millions of undocumented workers who are exploited daily, or standing by and watching a widening wealth gulf where the vast majority of Ameri-

cans play a high stakes poker game against a stacked deck where hand after hand is won by the 1 percent, we need politicians who put people before companies, who put those in need before those whose needs are already met.

These are tough issues, to be sure. They are issues that require strong political leadership and courage.

I have been following Oregon politics for over 30 years, and for 30 years — whether at the local, state, or federal level — I have watched elected leaders bob and weave to avoid taking a position on controversial issues.

Oftentimes endorsements are based on the lesser of two evils, not whether a candidate is really a champion for working Oregonians. But, occasionally, we experience a positive change in the caliber of candidates.

Leaders like U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Elizabeth Warren are focused on doing the right thing for all Americans, not just the 1%. They take courageous positions on trade, financial regulations and job creation.

They remind me of my friend and past Oregon Treasurer Ben Westlund, who made a philosophical transition during his battle with cancer that ultimately claimed his life. Ben's transformation from a partisan Republican to a champion for Oregon's children, workers, the

poor, the sick and aged changed the people around him. His dedication and leadership established a model of statesmanship that focused on the 99%, and constantly returned to the way jobs contribute to our Oregon quality of life.

During the last election cycle we endorsed a freshman class of Oregon legislators such as Oregon AFL-CIO Freshman of the Year Jennifer Williamson, who joined strong worker advocates like Legislator of the Year winners Michael Dembrow, Val Hoyle, and Tina Kotek, and their colleagues who stand up for Oregon workers day after day.

Yes, we have a "Help Wanted" sign up. We know these champions are few and far between, and we know they need more help.

The application is a questionnaire that more and more candidates refuse to fill out because they don't want to go on the record and they don't want to be held accountable. The application doesn't ask if you are Republican, Democrat, Working Families Party member, or a Libertarian. It only asks about your past and future support of Oregonians.

It asks if you're ready to be on our side. We hope more strong candidates apply.

*Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.*

## Public Employment Relations Conference March 20 in Salem

The University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) will host its 28th Public Employment Relations Conference (PERC) Thursday, March 20, at the Salem Conference Center. PERC is a gathering of public sector labor relations professionals from across Oregon, including attorneys, neutrals, and representatives from both unions and management.

A morning plenary session will cover recent cases before the Oregon Employment Relations Board. That will be followed by workshops dealing with labor lawyer ethics, Obamacare's impact on public employee health insurance, and mediation, arbitration, and family and medical leave.

For more information go to [lerc.uoregon.edu](http://lerc.uoregon.edu) or contact Helen Moss at [hmoss@uoregon.edu](mailto:hmoss@uoregon.edu).

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lection, paying fairly, any amount welcome. 503-939-8835

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COLLECTOR PAYS cash for older toys, oil paintings, American art pottery, and costume jewelry. 503 703-5952

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