

# Labor tallies a raft of wins in local primary elections

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

Organized labor stopped the “Bull Run Takeover,” saved two Clackamas County commissioners from right-wing challengers, and sent long-time union rep Rob Nosse to the Oregon House. Those were some highlights, for labor, of Oregon’s May 20 primary election.

Labor’s biggest ballot fight, in dollar terms, was against the ballot initiative to hand over the City of Portland’s water and sewer bureaus to a newly created board. Unions contributed \$119,000 of the nearly \$400,000 raised by the Stop the Bull Run Takeover committee, and AFSCME was far and away the biggest donor — \$82,000 between the state council and three locals. And that’s not counting over \$8,000 spent in legal fees to analyze the measure, said Oregon AFSCME Executive Director Ken Allen. AFSCME represents Water Bureau workers, and they found a lot to dislike about a charter amendment written by a corporate lobbyist, sponsored by a prominent Republican campaigner, and bankrolled by a handful of big water users. Also contributing were the Fire Fighters (\$10,000); UFCW Local 555, Teamsters Joint Council 37, and IBEW Local 48 (\$5,000 each); Professional and Technical Employees Local 17, formerly COPPEA (\$4,000); Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and Service Employees International Union Local 49 (\$2,500 each); and Laborers Local 483, Portland Association of Teachers, and Asbestos Workers Local 36 (\$1,000 each). In the end the pro-

posed charter amendment went down to defeat by a margin of 73 percent to 27 percent.

Democrat Jim Bernard has organized labor to thank for his re-election to the Clackamas County Commission. The conservative Oregon Transformation Project — with money from timber barons like Stimson Lumber CEO Andrew Miller — targeted Bernard this year, along with his fellow incumbent Clackamas County Commissioner Paul Savas, a moderate Republican. Oregon Transformation Project is the same group that helped elect virulently anti-union John Ludlow and Tootie Smith to the commission two years earlier. To defend Bernard, 11 labor organizations stepped forward with contributions totaling \$31,500, and helped get the word out to union members. Bernard won with 50.4 percent of the vote, compared to 49.1 percent for challenger Steve Bates. Savas had an easier time: The Oregon Transformation Project’s candidate, Karen Bowerman, a Lake Oswego city councilor, placed a distant second in a three-way race, with 35.2 percent of the vote.

There was celebrating at the Oregon AFL-CIO headquarters when long-time union representative Rob Nosse won the party primary for inner Southeast Portland in House District 42. Nosse, who works for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA), is a graduate of the Labor Candidates School and had heavy support from labor organizations throughout his campaign: over \$88,000 in direct contributions, plus \$66,000 in



ONA union representative Rob Nosse, celebrating May 20 at Oregon AFL-CIO HQ, will be State Representative Rob Nosse in 2015, thanks to union political muscle that put him over the top in the six-way Democratic primary in Southeast Portland’s House District 42. The win means he’ll join the district’s former state rep Diane Rosenbaum (left), now a state senator, in an expanded “labor caucus.”

in-kind support, including the help of ONA political organizer Jenn Baker, door-to-door canvass support from Working America, and free office space from the Oregon AFL-CIO. Scores of individual union staff members and leaders also contributed to a robust fundraising and volunteer campaign. The result of that full-court press was 49 percent of the vote — in a six-way race where the nearest competitor got 36 percent. And it was a doubly good week for Nosse: The day before the election, a federal judge overturned

Oregon’s ban on same-sex marriage, meaning legal recognition for Nosse’s marriage, in Vancouver, British Columbia, to James Laden. Since no Republican filed in the overwhelmingly Democratic district, Nosse is assured of a win in the November general election, and he’ll become part of the informal “labor caucus” of state legislators who come from the union movement.

So will Barbara Smith Warner, a former official of the National Association of Letter Carriers and later longtime aide to U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden. Smith Warner was appointed state representative last year for Northeast Portland’s House District 45, and won reelection with 67.77 percent of the vote against ONA member Tom Sincic.

Former state representative Jules Kopel Bailey, backed broadly by labor, won election to the Multnomah County Commission with 73 percent of the vote against Brian Wilson.

And a heap of labor-endorsed incumbents sailed to easy victory, including City of Portland Commissioners Nick Fish and Dan Saltzman, Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta

Smith; Washington County Chair Andy Duyck and Commissioner Greg Malinowski; Metro President Tom Hughes; and Metro councilors Shirley Craddick, Carlotta Collette, and Kathryn Harrington, who ran unopposed. All those positions are non-partisan, and because the winners got more than 50 percent, they were elected outright without a runoff in November.

Several candidate contests had labor backing both sides:

- Deborah Kafoury won election to Multnomah County Chair with 65.5 percent of the vote to 17.5 percent for second-place finisher Jim Francesconi. Francesconi was endorsed by AFSCME, SEIU, Operating Engineers, and the Pacific Regional Council of Carpenters; Kafoury was endorsed by most other local labor organizations.

- Kathleen Taylor similarly defeated Deborah Barnes in House District 41, winning 70 percent of the vote to Barnes’ 25 percent. Taylor was supported by the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, Iron Workers Local 29, IBEW Local 48, and Teamsters, while Barnes, a teacher and president of the North Clackamas Education Association, was endorsed by her union and by UFCW Local 555, SEIU Local 503, AFSCME, Clackamas County Fire Fighters, Oregon Nurses Association, and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters.

Several labor endorsees were defeated: In Washington County, former U.S. Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, who was endorsed by Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC), failed to unseat incumbent County Commissioner Bob Terry. And in Columbia County, circuit judge Cathleen Callahan, backed by NOLC and UFCW, placed second in a three-way race.

A union-endorsed three-year replacement levy to fund Columbia County jail operations passed narrowly with 51 percent of the vote. If it had failed, the jail was forecasted to close by June 30. And in Clackamas County, a labor-endorsed local option levy to support Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue passed with 63 percent of the vote.

## ...City disinvests in Walmart

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benefits, let alone to live on. She said workers were treated with a fundamental lack of respect by managers, who would constantly bully and ridicule her. It got so demeaning, she said, that “I finally had to stand up to make a difference.” She and her mother took part in an unfair labor practice strike last June “to hold Walmart accountable.”

She was fired for speaking out. “The company refuses to listen to our concerns, and when we speak out, Walmart retaliates,” she said.


[The National Labor Relations

Board in January charged Walmart with illegally firing some 60 workers in more than a dozen states who were participating in legally protected strikes and protests.]


Novick said he looks forward to reviewing the advisory committee’s recommendations, as well as a proposal for a permanent process to implement the principles for socially responsible investment.

The City still has four Walmart corporate bonds valued at \$27 million. Two \$5 million bonds mature Oct. 25, 2015. A \$2 million bond and a \$15 million bond mature April 11, 2016.


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**Why is it that a worker injured on the job is made to feel like they are now “the accused” who did something wrong? Good question! Don’t let them add insult to your injury!**

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820 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 200  
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