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TOP TWO, TAKE TWO

Centrist millionaires put a post-partisan primary before Oregon voters, again

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If you're a registered Oregon voter, there's a ballot measure coming to your mailbox this November that would end the primary as you know it. Like it or not, it was brought to you by members of the 1 percent.

Ballot Measure 90 would bring to Oregon the "top two" primary that's already law in Washington and California: All legislative, statewide and Congressional candidates would compete

head-to-head in the primary election, regardless of their party. The top two vote-getters in each race would square off in the November general election — even if both were Democrats or both were Republicans. In effect, the primary election would no longer be used by Democratic and Republican voters to choose their parties' candidates in the November general election. The same proposal was rejected two-to-one by Oregon voters in 2008.

Measure 90 is sponsored and fi-

nanced by millionaires James Kelly and Brett Wilcox, with backing from other millionaires, billionaire Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle, businesses, and the state's largest business groups. These are politically centrist millionaires who are said to equally dislike the influence of labor liberals in the Democratic Party and tea-party conservatives in the Republican Party.

With six weeks to go before ballots are mailed out, virtually all the labor organizations that have been the most in-

involved in electoral politics are gearing up to oppose Measure 90. That includes the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Oregon Education Association, Service Employees International Union Local 503, AF-SCME, the American Federation of Teachers, Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon School Employees Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, Teamsters Joint Council 37, and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters.

But on the other side, the Oregon

Working Families Party and some of its union supporters have endorsed the measure.

For a fuller understanding of the measure, the Labor Press talked with supporters and opponents.

First, some clarity: Supporters have sometimes called Measure 90 an "open primary" measure, but there's already something called an open primary, and Measure 90 isn't it. An open primary is one where a voter can decide on Elec-

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U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (right) stops to chat with Ben Guzman (center) and Chuck Little at the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council convention Aug. 22 in Bend. Guzman is a member of Laborers Local 320 and Little is executive secretary of the Pendleton Building Trades Council and a member of Laborers Local 121.

National building trades sees a 'once in a generation' opportunity to grow ranks

BEND — Construction unions are looking at "a once in a generation" opportunity to grow their ranks, said Brent Booker, secretary-treasurer of North America's Building Trades Unions (formerly the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO).

Booker was the keynote speaker at the 53rd annual convention of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council held Aug. 20-22 in Bend. It was the first time that a national leader of the building trades has attended a convention in Oregon.

"The one thing that has me so optimistic is the boom of domestic energy — of natural gas," Booker said.

The low price of natural gas, he said,

has spearheaded growth in the manufacturing sector, where the plastics industry, fertilizer industry, petro-chemical industry and others are planning to build manufacturing plants that range in size from \$800 million to \$7 billion.

"We're talking about mega projects as a direct result of the natural gas boom in this country," he said.

In Oregon, Booker pointed specifically to the \$7.5 billion Jordan Cove natural gas export facility, power plant and pipeline in Coos Bay that, if approved, will be built under a project labor agreement (PLA). Booker said a \$4 billion project at Cove Point in Maryland will break ground this fall under a PLA, cre-

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Longshore workers ratify contract at NW grain terminals

Ending lockouts at grain facilities in Portland and Vancouver

Longshore workers who load grain at export terminals in Oregon and Washington ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association.

The vote was 1,475 to 193, and included members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 8 in Portland, Local 4 in Vancouver, Local 21 in Longview, Lo-

cal 19 in Seattle, and Local 23 in Tacoma, Wash., employed at Louis Dreyfus Commodities (LDC) in Portland and Seattle, United Grain Corp. in Vancouver, and Columbia Grain Inc. in Portland. LDC is a French-owned company, United Grain is owned by Mitsui Corp. of Japan, and Columbia Grain is owned by Marubeni Corp. of Japan.

Negotiations began in August of 2012 and involved 70 separate sessions, including multiple marathon mediation sessions held under the auspices of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). The Association

imposed a concessionary contract in December 2012 that had been rejected by 94 percent of the ILWU. That was followed by lockouts at United Grain in February and Columbia Grain in May. [A fourth grain exporter, Tacoma-based TEMCO, left the Association in February 2013 and bargained its own contract with the ILWU. TEMCO has facilities in Kalama, Tacoma and Portland.]

Terms of the new contract include work rule changes and wage increases over the life of the agreement. Details of those changes were not disclosed. In a press release, ILWU said the contract

is a result of both sides "compromising significantly from their original positions, resulting in a workable collective bargaining agreement that preserves the work of the ILWU-represented workforce and fosters stability for the export grain industry, the union said in a statement."

Locked out union members returned to work Aug. 27, and the parties agreed to drop all pending National Labor Relations Board and other legal actions associated with the dispute.

The new pact will be in effect until May 31, 2018.

A tentative deal was reached five weeks after Washington Gov. Jay Inslee stopped providing state police escorts for grain inspectors entering United Grain's terminal. The Washington Department of Agriculture requested the escorts more than eight months ago, citing safety concerns for its employees crossing a picket line. Inslee agreed to the taxpayer-funded escorts in hope that it would spur negotiations — and lead to a quick settlement. When that didn't happen, he discontinued the service, effective July 6.

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