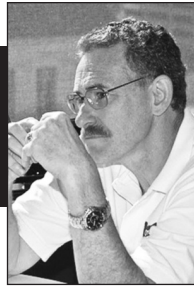


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley stood in front of a crowd Saturday morning giving an impassioned speech about what America could, and should, be. He was fired up and ready to put all his effort into the 2014 election. He didn't look like a guy who had taken a Koch brothers pounding for the last month.

The Koch brothers and their 1%er friends have dumped hundreds of millions of dollars into the 2014 election. They have already paid for a mega-media campaign to smear Sen. Merkley in their efforts to elect their candidate: Dr. Monica Wehby.

The effort by the 1%ers to defeat Sen. Merkley and replace him with a candidate that reflects their values — an agenda paid by the rich for

the benefit of the already rich — is really what the 2014 election is about. The airwaves are filled with messages about how if we just removed unnecessary obstacles to business, or provided more tax incentives, then good jobs would suddenly appear. If we could just overturn Obamacare, the bottom would fall out of health care costs and our for-profit health care model would provide comprehensive, cheap, coverage.

The truth is that Reaganomics' reverse Robin Hoodism has been taking from the poor and giving to the rich for over three decades and it has never worked. Obamacare has reduced costs, opened up access to healthcare, and expanded coverage for millions of Americas.

The 2014 election is about giving Oregonians a fair shot: those folks who get up every day and go to work, those children who go to school to prepare for the jobs of the future, those folks who wish they could work but physical or mental challenges are a barrier, or those folks who try and try to find work but come up empty.

A fair shot for Oregonians is a minimum wage that keeps families out of poverty. It is a fair shot for women to receive equal pay for equal work. It's a fair shot to have time off to heal when you or a family member are sick. A fair shot is an opportunity to save for a stable, dependable retirement with respect and dignity.

This should be our frame as we ask where candidates stand in 2014. Do they stand for an agenda that gives all Oregonian a shot at — at the very least — the minimum that families need? Or do they stand with the hollow promises and misleading messages of the 1%ers' agenda?

The 1%ers are adept at finding issues that divide us. Let's focus on a fair shot agenda that unites us.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

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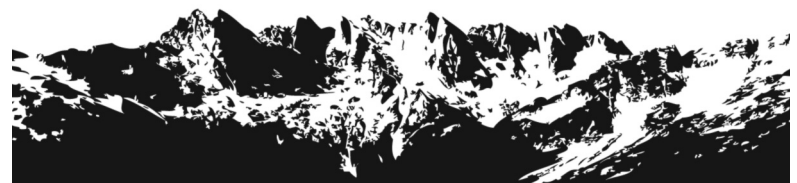
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