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Portland*On Election Day*

Oregon bucks national trend, elects labor-friendly pols

Oregonians bucked the national trend on Election Day, with the Oregon AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE) coming close to an electoral “sweep,” electing or re-electing labor friendly politicians and passing or defeating ballot measures. (See Page 2 for national results.)

Every Democratic incumbent in Congress and the governor’s office won re-election; in fact, not one was even close. Democrats also picked up two more seats in the Oregon Senate and one more seat in the House. That advantage — 18-12 in the Oregon Senate and 35-25 in the Oregon House — will give organized labor a fighting chance of passing pro-worker legislation next year, like raising the minimum wage and guaranteeing the right to sick leave.

One ballot measure that was fiercely opposed by most unions — a “top-two primary” measure sponsored by centrist millionaires and billionaires — went down to defeat by a two-to-one margin, despite outspending opponents by three to one.

“I couldn’t be more proud of the work that union members did, and I hope the Koch brothers and their ilk heard us loud and clear: ‘stay out of

Oregon,’” said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain

Members of AFL-CIO-affiliated unions took part in an eight-region field campaign that spanned from Astoria to Bend to Medford, Chamberlain said.

“We know that the hundreds of thousands of conversations they had with their fellow union members helped pro-worker candidates like Senator Jeff Merkley and Governor John Kitzhaber win, and beat back Measure 90, which would have made it harder for working people to run for office. This field program bucked the national trend, and Oregon will be better for it.”

Voter turnout in Oregon was relatively strong for a midterm election. Out of 2.2 million registered voters in the state, 69.5 percent, or 1.5 million returned ballots. When including eligible voters, however, turnout slipped to 52 percent, according to the United States Election Project.

In Washington, only 51.2 percent of registered voters cast ballots — and only 38.6 percent of eligible voters voted. It was worse nationally, where only 36.6 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. Census numbers from 2010 show that more than 70 million U.S.



Labor-endorsed John Kitzhaber was re-elected to an unprecedented fourth term as governor of Oregon.

citizens of voting age are not registered to vote.

What follows is a ballot scorecard:

Jeff Merkley for U.S. Senate. A working class hero is something to be. Merkley, 58, one of labor’s best allies in the Senate, defeated Monica Wehby,

a rich doctor and first-time candidate who cribbed even her health care policy proposals from other Republican candidates’ talking points. Merkley won with 56 percent of the vote.

John Kitzhaber for Governor. Kitzhaber, 67, antagonized public em-

ployee unions when he led pension cuts that are being challenged in court. But he fought hard for a new I-5 Bridge, and he did broker a deal that kept an anti-union measure off the ballot. And he was better on labor issues than his challenger, conservative Republican state representative Dennis Richardson. Kitzhaber won an unprecedented fourth term with just under 50 percent of the vote.

Suzanne Bonamici, Earl Blumenauer, Peter DeFazio and Kurt Schrader were re-elected to Congress by wide margins. [Republican **Greg Walden** was re-elected to Congress in District 2. He was endorsed by the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, but not by the Oregon AFL-CIO.]

Measure 89, the Equal Rights measure, passed 63.8 percent to 36.2 percent. It amends the state Constitution to guarantee that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the State of Oregon or by any political subdivision in this state on account of sex.”

Measure 90, the top two primary,

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Postal workers cheer postmaster general’s resignation



Newly re-elected U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) joined postal workers and their allies at a Veterans Day rally in Portland to protest the U.S. Postal Service’s plan to close 82 mail processing and distribution centers in January — including ones in Springfield, Bend, and Pendleton, Oregon. (Photo courtesy of Tom Richardson)

Call for a moratorium on USPS’s plan to close 82 mail sorting centers — three of them in Oregon

Cheers went up from hundreds of postal workers Nov. 14 when Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe announced that he was resigning, effective Feb. 1, 2015.

Postal workers and their supporters were rallying Nov. 14 at the U.S. Postal Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. — site of a meeting of the Postal Board of Governors — to urge a halt to their plans to shutter 82 more mail processing plants on Jan. 5. The action, they warned, will further slow mail delivery, and eliminate tens of thousands of jobs, many of them held by military veterans. [Veterans get preference in hiring at the USPS.

Twenty-five percent of postal workers are veterans.]

Similar rallies took place simultaneously at 150 locations throughout the United States. In Oregon, rallies were held in the three towns scheduled to lose their mail plants — Springfield, Bend, and Pendleton — plus Medford. A rally and march took place in Portland on Veterans Day with U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon).

Merkley and 50 other U.S. senators (including Ron Wyden of Oregon), and 160 U.S. House members (including Earl Blumenauer and Peter DeFazio of Oregon) have called for a one-year moratorium on the reduction in service and the closure of the mail processing centers, to allow Congress time to enact postal legislation that would improve postal service.

“The mail has already been slowed

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