

Nationwide, labor loses on candidates, wins on measures

Around the United States, labor-backed swing-state candidates fared poorly in the November 2014 general election, yet on ballot measures, voters mostly agreed with labor, passing minimum wage increases and the right to sick leave.

Republicans added 14 seats to their majority in the U.S. House, and picked up at least eight seats in the U.S. Senate (with a Louisiana race to be decided in a December runoff). The GOP Senate gains mean a switch to a Republican majority when the new senators take office in January: At least 53 of the 100 seats, and maybe 54.

Meanwhile, five members of a crop of anti-union Republican governors who swept into office four years ago were re-elected, despite being targeted by the national AFL-CIO for retirement. Chief among them was Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, whose 2010 law stripping public employees of all meaningful collective bargaining rights provoked a lengthy but ultimately un-

successful occupation of the state Capitol in Madison. Walker survived a 2012 recall effort, and this year won reelection to a second four-year term, with 52 percent of the vote. Ohio Gov. John Kasich — whose law stripping public worker union rights was struck down by voters in 2011 — won reelection by a landslide 64 percent. Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder — who signed an anti-union “right-to-work” law in the state where the United Auto Workers was born — won with 51 percent. Florida Gov. Rick Scott — who pushed vouchers and charter schools and tried to curtail collection of union dues and political contributions — won with 48 percent of the vote. And Maine Gov. Paul LePage — who removed a labor history mural from a state office building — beat a challenge from former congressman and union steelworker Mike Michaud by 48 to 43 percent.

Labor did have at least one notable statewide win: In a closely-fought race

for California school superintendent, union-backed incumbent Tom Torlakson, a former teacher, beat billionaire-backed former charter school executive Marshall Tuck.

And on a slew of ballot measures, voters took the side of unions, public employees, and low-wage workers.

When minimum wage increases are on the ballot, they win

Minimum wage increases were on the ballot in multiple states, counties and cities, and passed, in all but one case, by sizable margins:

- **Alaska** — \$9.75 an hour by 2016, except for minors working fewer than 30 hours a week; passed by 69 percent
- **Nebraska** — \$9 by 2016, passed by 59 percent
- **South Dakota** — \$8.50 per hour by 2015, passed by 55 percent
- **Arkansas** — \$8.50 per hour by 2017, passed by 66 percent

Under those four measures, an esti-

mated 420,000 workers will get raises starting in January. And that's not all. San Francisco voters approved by 77 percent a raise to \$15 an hour by 2018. And Oakland voters, by an 81 percent margin, approved a measure that raises the minimum wage to \$12.25 an hour next March, and gives workers the right to at least five days of sick leave per year, and nine days at employers where there are more than 10 workers.

Only one minimum wage increase failed at the polls: A measure in Eureka, California, population 27,000, would have raised the minimum wage to \$12 an hour for employers with 25 or more employees, but got 38 percent support.

Meanwhile, voters in Illinois passed a non-binding advisory measure calling on the state legislature to raise the minimum wage to \$10 by 2015. And in Wisconsin, voters in nine counties and four cities passed non-binding measures calling on the legislature to raise the state minimum to \$10.10 an hour. [Since Scott Walker was re-elected and both legislative chambers are controlled by Republicans, that might not happen, but on Oct. 27, a union-backed group filed a lawsuit to force a minimum wage increase under a law that says the state's minimum must be not less than a living wage.]

Paid sick days

Besides Oakland, sick leave measures also passed in Trenton and Mont-

clair, New Jersey, and in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts measure, which passed by 60 percent, requires employers with 11 or more employees to offer up to 40 hours of paid sick time per calendar year, while smaller employees must offer the same amount of leave, unpaid. All told, it's estimated that a million more workers will get sick leave as a result of the measures.

Other ballot measures:

- California Proposition 47 — backed by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor — passed with 59 percent; it reduces sentences for non-violent drug and property crimes and spends the savings on programs designed to keep offenders out of prison.

- Voters in Phoenix, Arizona, overturned a city ordinance that replaced public employee pensions with a 401(k).

- In Anchorage, Alaska, 54 percent voted to repeal a local ordinance that limited city worker pay raises, eliminated binding arbitration and the right to strike, and set up a system for outsourcing union work.

- Voters in Alachua County, Florida (Gainesville), approved by 72 percent a non-binding straw ballot in favor of amending the U.S. Constitution to declare that corporations are not people and money is not speech. The measure is in response the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Citizens United case.

Candidates supported by the NW Oregon Labor Council do well on election night

The Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC) fared quite well on Election Day, winning four of five races that it was involved in.

Tops on the list was the election of 29-year-old union activist Kyle Allen to the Hillsboro City Council. Allen, taking his first stab at elected office, soundly defeated Hillsboro school board member Monte Akers, capturing nearly 64 percent of the vote.

Voter turnout in Washington County, where Hillsboro is located, was 66.6 percent.

NOLC-endorsed Henry Heimuller was re-elected to the Columbia County Board of Commissioners. He defeated Wayne Mayo 54.5 to 45 percent.

And Cathleen Callahan was elected Judge for the Circuit Court, 19th District. She out-pollled Jean Marie Martwick with 54 percent of the vote.

Martwick was appointed to fill a vacancy left by the retirement of Judge Steven B. Reed last fall by Gov. John Kitzhaber. She was challenged in her first bid for a full term of office by Callahan, a Goble resident who has a law office in St. Helens, and attorney Jason Heym.

In the May primary, Martwick won 37.7 percent of the vote, while Callahan won 36.4 percent.

Voter turnout in Columbia County was 72 percent.

In Portland, NOLC-endorsed Ballot Measure 26-159 passed handily, capturing nearly 74 percent of the vote. The \$68 million general obligation bond will be used to fix playgrounds and trails, and improve park facilities. It is a continuation of an existing parks bond that expires in 2015.

Voter turnout in Multnomah County

was 67 percent.

NOLC's only loss came in Clackamas County, where David Robinson lost his bid to unseat Sherry Hall for

County clerk. The vote was 59 percent to 40 percent.

Voter turnout in Clackamas County was 66 percent.

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family

Labor's Community Service Agency & NW Oregon Labor Council's Annual

“Presents From Partners” FAMILY'S HOLIDAY PARTY

Donations needed for Moms and Dads too!

What do children like even more than getting toys for Christmas?

Giving gifts to their parents!

Again this year, IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union is sponsoring a room where children can pick gifts for Moms and Dads at the “Presents from Partners” family holiday party.

Please make donations of cash
or small unwrapped gifts
for Moms and Dads.



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