

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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# ...Wanted: A mayor for the 99 percent?

From Page 1

public-sector union members, he says even on a county commissioner's salary he couldn't afford a house in the inner Southeast Portland neighborhood he grew up in. Instead, he and his wife live in a \$375,900 ranch house in Multnomah Village. Wheeler, in contrast, was born into a family of Oregon timber barons that stretches back to the state's founding. He lives in a \$1.25 million 4,000-square-foot home in the Southwest Hills, and his personal wealth enabled him and his wife to contribute \$270,000 to his past campaigns for chair and treasurer.

Bailey says he won't accept individual campaign contributions larger than \$250. Wheeler is not limiting campaign contributions, and had to wrap up our interview in order to make fundraising calls.

In our interview, Wheeler copped to being a member of the 1 percent, but said people can judge him based on his record: As county chair, he used executive orders to implement transgender health benefits and to "ban the box" in order to give ex-offenders a fairer shot at em-

## MAY THE BEST CANDIDATE WIN

### Northwest Oregon Labor Council sponsors a debate



JULES BAILEY

**When:** 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25  
**Where:** IBEW Local 48 union hall 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland  
**Who:** Mayoral candidates Jules Bailey and Ted Wheeler, in front of an audience of union members  
**Rules:** 5-minute introductions, 1-minute responses to questions, 30-second rebuttals, and 3-minute closing remarks. Call the Labor Council at 503-235-9444 to suggest questions.



TED WHEELER

ployment. And as treasurer, Wheeler supported a bond-funded endowment to help with state college tuition — a proposal that was conceived by the union-backed Oregon Working Families Party — though voters rejected the confusingly-titled and thinly-supported ballot measure that was needed to implement it. Wheeler also helped develop and pass a program that will help up to 400,000 private-sector workers save for retirement when it launches next year. [Service Employees International Union, the union that proposed it, credits Bailey for the legislation's passage in the House.]

**Relationship with city workers:** City labor relations will most likely improve under Wheeler or Bailey. For years, Portland's mayor and City Council have stood aside while city attorneys and HR managers assumed combative postures toward city employee unions. The result: Bad blood, drawn-out contract negotiations, and contract violations that resulted in big-dollar losses when unions won in arbitration. Wheeler and Bailey say that will come to an end when they're mayor: They'll take charge of HR and will be more hands-on with labor. Union relations were fractious with the county too — be-

fore Wheeler took over. AF-SCME credits him for creating a much more respectful and collaborative relationship, which continued under Chair Deb Kafoury.

**Public employee retiree benefits:** As treasurer, Wheeler came out early sounding the alarm over PERS difficulty recovering from investment losses, and he called for cutting retiree cost-of-living increases to reduce the unfunded liability. When Kitzhaber later pushed that proposal, public employee unions fought hard against it, and warned the cuts would be struck down by the state Supreme Court. As state rep, Bailey voted against the PERS cuts; an *Oregonian* newspaper editorial said the electorate should remember his vote. In the end, the cuts were struck down, as the unions predicted. Wheeler now says that was the right decision. PERS investments have rebounded somewhat in recent years under his oversight, and Wheeler has put the message out that the system is no longer in crisis.

**Trade agreements:** Mayors have no say over NAFTA-style

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