

Two Portland mayoral candidates square off at labor council meeting

Portland mayoral candidate Jules Bailey questioned whether his opponent, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, is committed to staying in office for more than one term if he is elected in November. Bailey made the remark at a debate Jan. 25 held by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council prior to its monthly delegates' meeting. More than 100 people were in attendance.

Responding to a question about the combative relationship between workers and management at the city, both candidates agreed that labor relations are broken, and that the next mayor needs to be more actively engaged in a leadership role to fix it.

"We currently have a culture at City Hall that is standing in the way of progress," Bailey said. "(Portland) needs a mayor who is going to be there, not just for four years, but for eight years. We've had too many one-term mayors, and we need somebody for whom being mayor is their first choice —

and is really going to make it a priority to have a mayor who is really going to change the culture."

Wheeler fired back in his rebuttal. "I think that was a jab at me, but I'm not sure. So let's review the videotape. Jules, in the last three months, according to the newspapers, you have looked at running for Multnomah County chair, Metro president, county commissioner, which you did, and a year and three months into your first term as a district county commissioner you are now running for mayor. So, I don't think you're in a position to talk to me about my commitment to a political job."

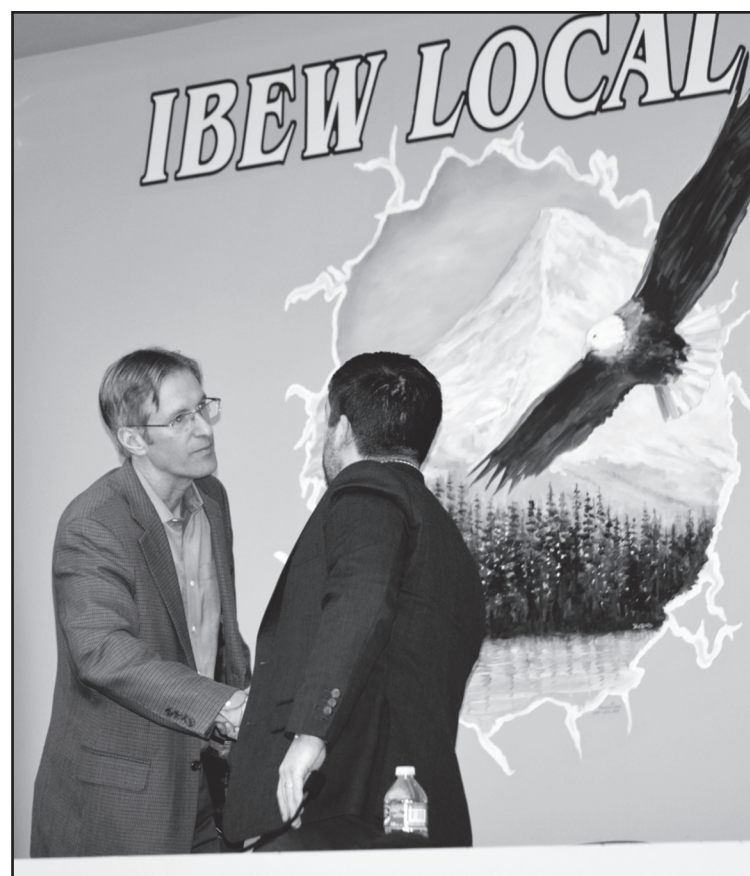
Wheeler, 53, served for 3-1/2 years as Multnomah County chair before being appointed treasurer. [Gov. Ted Kulongoski appointed him to the post following the death of Ben Westlund.] He was re-elected in 2012, but is term-limited from running again. It is no secret that he has aspirations to someday run for governor.

Bailey, 36, is a former state legislator serving in his first term as a Multnomah County commissioner.

Right now, both men want to succeed Mayor Charlie Hales, who is not seeking re-election after one term.

Both candidates are Democrats and are well-respected in the labor community. Both say they are committed to helping working families, and both point to their political track records for proof.

They are in broad agreement on most labor issues. They oppose right-to-work laws; they believe workers who don't want to belong to a union should at least have to pay "fair share" fees; they don't support contracting out unless it is a unique situation that can't be done in-house, and then done responsibly; they support project labor agreements, community policing, and a variety of other issues. Both candidates also have made housing affordability and income inequality key features



Portland mayoral candidates Ted Wheeler (left) and Jules Bailey shake hands following a 90-minute debate Jan. 25 hosted by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

of their campaign. (See NW Labor Press, Jan. 15, 2016, or read online at www.nwlabourpress.org/2016/01/mayor for more on where they stand.)

Since they can't draw much distinction between their public policies, the candidates touted their leadership skills, experience, and ability to collaborate. Both gave shining examples of their work at Multnomah County.

"Labor relations reported to me as chair of Multnomah County," Wheeler said. "When I got there, we had a dysfunctional board, a lack of communication, silo leadership, labor practices that were concerning to people, lots of grievances, unfair labor practices, and bargaining that, at best, was sticky. By the time I left, three-and-a-half-years later, we had signed long-term contracts, every labor leader met with me on a monthly basis, I had an open-door policy, every labor leader had my personal cell phone so we could address problems for issues before they bubbled up into something significant."

Wheeler said the City of Portland has a similar situation. "I will do what I did at Multnomah County and rebuild that operation, improve communications and performance. You won't have to wonder if I'll do it, because it's something I've already done."

Bailey said as commissioner he was the first to propose paid family leave at the county, at a

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— Mayoral candidate
Jules Bailey

time when no other public jurisdiction had it.

"The word I got back from management was, 'that's something we're going to have to bargain over.' I said absolutely not. There will be plenty of things to bargain over. This is just the right thing to do. Let's work with our labor partners and let's get it done. We did it. We got it done. The city followed suit. That's the kind of thing that can happen when labor and management work together."

The two candidates also sparred over campaign contributions.

Bailey said he was limiting contributions to \$250 per person. Wheeler said he is not limiting campaign contributions, but will publicly disclose all contributions — and will not take any third party money.

"The biggest threat to you is dark money coming in through independent expenditure ac-

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