

# The union choice for Oregon Secretary of State is . . .

All three Democrats running for Oregon Secretary of State — Brad Avakian, Richard Devlin, and Val Hoyle — have long and close relationships with organized labor. The Oregon AFL-CIO stayed neutral in the primary; Oregon Building Trades Council endorsed all three. Oregon's secretary of state oversees elections, corporate records, and audits of state agencies, and becomes governor in the event of a vacancy. The Northwest Labor Press interviewed all three.

Avakian has been courting labor support for eight years as Oregon's labor commissioner, a job in which he's responsible for overseeing apprenticeship programs and enforcing wage and hour, civil rights, and prevailing wage laws. He's run a very aggressive campaign and is endorsed by as many as 20 labor organizations. A civil rights lawyer by profession, he ran for Secretary of State once before, in 2008, but accepted the labor commissioner position when then-governor Ted Kulongoski appointed him to replace Dan Gardner, who resigned. Two



Brad Avakian, Richard Devlin, and Val Hoyle get ready for an October debate at the Oregon AFL-CIO convention in Seaside.

years later, he ran for Congress and lost to Suzanne Bonamici. Avakian is proposing a number of things that have not been part of the secretary of state's job, like getting more civics education in schools, partnering with green energy providers, and auditing private companies that have business with the state, to make sure they obey labor laws.

Hoyle, former House Majority Leader, is backed by the Fire Fighters and Painters unions and by IBEW Local 48. The daughter

of a union firefighter, she was once a member of HERE Local 26 in Boston, and in college she worked as a lobbyist for Massachusetts building trades unions. She moved to Oregon to work for the Burley bike trailer company, a worker-owned coop. In her campaign for Secretary of State, Hoyle says she wants same-day voter registration and to make ballots available in other languages.

Devlin, endorsed by the Oregon Nurses Association, has a

31-year record of public service, first at Tualatin City Council and Metro, then as a state legislator. He's co-chair of Ways and Means, and a former Senate Majority Leader. He's most enthusiastic about the job's auditor role, making sure state agencies are efficient and effective.

Avakian and Hoyle say they're strongly against NAFTA-style trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership; Devlin's position wasn't as clear. Avakian says he supports a union-backed ballot measure to raise taxes on big corporations; Hoyle and Devlin said it wouldn't be appropriate for someone seeking to be the state's top elections officer to take sides. Avakian and Devlin wouldn't say who they prefer for president; Hoyle backs Hillary Clinton.

Avakian and Hoyle have each raised about \$580,000 in the last year and a half; Devlin raised \$287,000. Avakian and Hoyle say they'd like to see a publicly financed elections. All three say they want campaign finance limits and greater transparency.

— Don McIntosh

## What would you say to our readers?

### Brad Avakian

"Pick the progressive Democrat. Pick the labor Democrat. There's a reason that nearly all the unions in this race have endorsed me and not my opponents. And that's because I will always stand up for a collective bargaining agreement. I will always respect the picket line."

### Val Hoyle

"I grew up in a union household. I consider myself a labor Democrat. I come from a more blue collar background. My father was a union member. My grandfather helped start the New York Laborers union. My son is member of UFCW. My politics are based on the values that I learned growing up in union halls."

### Richard Devlin

"I believe union members really have a stake in good government, and the secretary of state is at the core of good government, the primary responsibilities being the chief elections officer and the chief auditor of public accounts. Ensuring that our elections are impartial and fair and ensuring that public dollars are spent wisely effectively and efficiently should be a concern to union members and all Oregonians."

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