

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



To our union volunteers: THANK YOU!

As the outcomes of the 2016 General Election sink in, one thing is certain: Union members and working people have stepped up to the plate in a tremendous way over the past few months. The efforts by unions across Oregon in mobilizing members to vote for candidates and issues who support us cannot be ignored. I'm grateful for everything you did, and everything we accomplished together since Labor Day.

Thank you to each volunteer who knocked on doors, made phone calls, passed out fliers, and helped with every component of the Oregon AFL-CIO's Labor 2016 program.

Looking at the numbers, it's staggering: Together we knocked on over 100,000 doors, made over 260,000 phone calls, sent almost 650,000 pieces of mail, and handed out over 2,800 fliers at worksites. Volunteers from over 30 different unions filled more than 1,000 shifts.

Our efforts included canvasses and phone banks in the Portland metropolitan area, Bend, Salem, Woodburn, Medford, Ashland, Eugene, Albany and more. We saw results from all our efforts with some important victories for our endorsed statewide and legislative candidates.

The election of Gov. Kate Brown will push our state forward for working people. Gov. Brown has a long history of advocacy, and I know she will continue to stand up for workers and our unions in the coming years.

I'm disappointed that Brad Avakian will not move on to Secretary of State, but I know that he will continue to be a strong voice for workers as labor commissioner. Working people will continue to make sure all our voices, not just those of large corporations, are heard in Oregon's elections.

While Measure 97 was defeated, we changed the debate about the massive gap between where we are and what we need to fund education, health care and senior services in Oregon. To close that gap, we can no longer afford to be 50th in the nation in corporate taxes. We have started a conversation that will not be ignored.

Our efforts on behalf of union-endorsed candidates in our State Legislature have shown us that in communities across Oregon, working people are eager to support leaders who stand up for our issues and our priorities. We look forward to a productive 2017 legislative session and more opportunities to advance an agenda designed to give all Oregonians a fair shot at prosperity.

I'm grateful for the volunteers across Oregon who made our wins possible. We could not have done this without union members standing together to fight for what we believe in. I look forward to what Oregon's union movement will accomplish next.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 130,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

Big wins in Washington for labor

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, ended up with much to celebrate in this year's general election results. All 12 statewide candidates it endorsed won office. All three of its endorsed ballot measures passed, including a measure that will raise the minimum wage to \$13.50 over the next four years and guarantee all workers paid sick leave. And the carbon tax measure it opposed — which failed to invest in clean energy and worsened state budget challenges — went down to defeat.

And that's not all. Puget Sound voters approved \$54 billion in transit improvements over the next 25 years, including 62 miles of light rail and new bus and heavy rail service to King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

And Seattle voters passed a measure — by 77 percent — to improve working conditions for hotel workers. Effective immediately, hotels with 100 or more rooms must provide health insurance to full-time employees and limit housekeeper workload to 5,000 square feet per shift — to protect them from injury. And hotels with 60 or more rooms must take steps to combat sexual harassment and assault by guests.

Then there's the Washington



Legislature, which has been gridlocked for years between a GOP-led Senate and a Democrat-led House. This election, with labor support, Democrats added two seats to their House majority, which is now 52 to 46. And in the Senate, Democrats gained one seat, reaching a 25-24 majority — in theory. The problem is: Mason County Sen. Tim Sheldon, who tells voters his preference is the Democratic Party, has caucused with the Republicans since 2012. Assuming he continues to do so, expect more gridlock. And that's at a time when Washington lawmakers face a state Supreme Court order to finalize a plan to fully fund public schools by 2018.

Probst defeat a big union loss

Labor had high hopes of retaking the Washington Senate by electing Tim Probst in the 17th Legislative District in eastern Vancouver. But he lost by almost 5,000 votes to state Rep. Lynda Wilson, who is one of the most anti-union Republicans in

the Legislature. Wilson is married to a board member of the anti-union Freedom Foundation. Freedom Foundation is the group that has sent mail and canvassers to union-represented home care workers urging them to stop paying union dues.

Worse yet for labor, Wilson's House seat was won by a Freedom Foundation staffperson, Vicki Craft.

Labor also failed to unseat incumbent Southwest Washington Republican Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler. Jim Moeller trailed her badly 39 to 61 percent. Moeller had to give up his Vancouver state Senate seat to run. He was succeeded by union-endorsed Democrat Annette Cleveland.

SW Washington legislative races

Here's how WSLC-endorsed candidates fared on election night:

17th Legislative District
Senate: **Tim Probst** LOST
House 1: **Sam Kim** LOST

19th Legislative District
Senate: **Dean Takko** WON
House 1: **Teresa Purcell** WON
House 2: **Brian Blake** WON

49th Legislative District
Senate: **Annette Cleveland** WON
House 1: **Sharon Wylie** WON
House 2: **Monica Stonier** WON

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