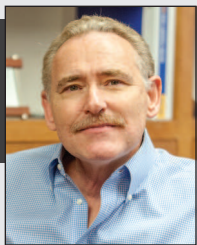


Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Missouri: Roadmap to victory

On Aug. 7, Missourians handily defeated Proposition A, a statewide so-called “right to work” measure in a sweeping victory. At a 2:1 ratio, Missouri voters pushed back against this dangerous legislation and attracted national attention for creating a pathway forward for unions, inspiration for workers, and a renewed vigor for the labor movement on the heels of the Janus V. AFSCME decision in June by the U.S. Supreme Court.

What’s more, it has snapped politicians to attention. Following the landslide vote against Prop. A, former Missouri governor Jay Nixon told Politico “I wouldn’t want to be on the ballot if I was in favor of right to work in 90 days. Clearly, there’s been a path defined.”

While Nixon isn’t on the ballot, his statement carries a lot of weight. In the months leading up to Janus, stories about unions’ declining power were frequent. They counted us out, despite the wave of educators walking out and striking across the country. In Oregon, we saw the struggles at places like Burgerville and Volunteers of America as indicators of a rising tide of collective action. Missouri is the proof of that, showing us what happens when unions truly stand together to defend workers’ rights.

The hustle by unions on the ground in Missouri was remarkable. Dedicated union members, leaders and staff from across the country were embedded in the robust campaign, including over a dozen from Oregon. Together with Missouri’s union movement, they knocked over 800,000 doors. They dominated the airwaves with ads, ran robust digital media campaigns and texted and called voters to mobilize supporters of the campaign to knock out Prop. A. The campaign also focused on persuading voters to reach across party lines to support Missouri’s unions. According to Politico, as many as half of the Republicans who voted did so against Prop A., accounting for about 300,000 votes in a state where Republican legislators have pushed for “right to work” for years.

Equally impressive are the 310,000+ signatures turned in by Missouri’s unions to repeal “right to work” last year. For years, anti-union legislators attempted to pass “right-to-work” which finally stuck in 2017, leading to the August 7th election and subsequent victory at the polls. Missouri’s unions’ dedication to defending workers’ rights and refusing to become the U.S.’s 28th state under “right to work” should be a lesson to all of us. Both the signature-gathering and the following electoral campaign should serve as a roadmap for how unions can fight back in an age where corporate dollars pour into any politician or law seeking to shut us down.

Oregon’s Union Movement is taking notes from Missouri. While efforts to undermine our unions in Oregon may look different than in Missouri, there is no shortage of work to do to make Oregon a place where working people have a fair shot at prosperity. Whether it’s defeating ballot measures which hurt workers, defending a champion for workers like Governor Kate Brown, or electing a new advocate for workers’ rights to our legislature, union members will be busy across Oregon this election season. Missouri’s example of fusing union solidarity with cutting edge campaigning is how we can win big for working people here in Oregon, and how unions around the country can turn the tide against attacks on our rights.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

...Missouri voters trounce ‘right-to-work’

From Page 1

not just union members.... We would talk to people and even if they weren’t a union member they’d say, ‘My mom was a union member and that’s why I have this house.’”

Joining members of Missouri Local 101 of the Operating Engineers and other pro-union volunteers, Strickland spoke with over 300 people at more than 200 homes, as part of the canvass effort organized by the union-backed anti-Proposition A group We Are Missouri.

It was by any standard a massive effort, drawing union staff from around the nation to Missouri. The “no” campaign raised over \$16 million, compared to \$5.2 million for the “yes” campaign.

Besides Strickland, at least 15 others from Oregon went to Missouri: UFCW Local 555 sent a crew of 13 people for 10 days. And the Oregon AFL-CIO sent regional field staff members Evan Lasley and Noah Goldberg-Jaffe for a week.

The right-to-work law — passed as Senate Bill 19 last year — would have taken effect on Aug. 28, 2017. But the Missouri AFL-CIO gathered more than 310,000 signatures — three times as many as they needed — to refer it to the ballot. The



Operating Engineers Local 701 organizer Scott Strickland flew to Missouri to help beat an anti-union right-to-work law. Backing him up was his fiancée Jenny Stinson, who took time off work and paid out of pocket to join the fight.

measure was supposed to appear on the Nov. 6, 2018 ballot, but the Republican-majority Legislature earlier this year voted on party lines to move the election to Aug. 7, thinking that a low-turnout would work in their favor.

In the end, the tally was 937,241 to 452,075: 67 percent of Missouri voters said no to “right to work.”

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