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ELECTION 2018: A night of wins for working people

Around the nation and in Oregon and Washington, union political efforts bore fruit election night.

By Don McIntosh

THE RETURN OF A DEMOCRATIC HOUSE

While most Americans didn't vote on Nov. 6, the estimated 114 million who *did* delivered control of the U.S. House of Representatives to Democrats for the first time in eight years. Whether or not it was a referendum on the Trump administration, it was a clear rejection of his party after Republicans passed the biggest corporate tax cut ever and tried but failed to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Come January, Democrats' new 228-207 majority in the House will mean deadlock or compromise in Congress for the next two years. That means any further plans by Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act or monkey with "entitlements" like Social Security are moot. It's unclear whether Democrats will cooperate to pass Trump's slightly improved NAFTA replacement agreement with Canada and Mexico. With Republicans still in control of the Senate and White House, Democrats won't be able to pass their own legislation, but they *will* be able to model what a future Democratic Congress could deliver. Let's hope that includes labor's agenda of a higher minimum wage, infrastructure in-



As Portland-area Democrats gathered at union-represented Hilton Hotel, it was Oregon AFL-CIO chief of staff Graham Trainor who announced the night's big news: the re-election of Governor Kate Brown.

vestment, and an easier path to a union.

SAYONARA, SCOTT WALKER, AND BYE-BYE TO BRUCE RAUNER The 2018 election had many sweet results for union members, but perhaps none sweeter than the defeat of Wisconsin governor Scott Walker and Illinois governor Bruce

Rauner. Walker famously stripped Wisconsin public employees of their collective bargaining rights in 2010, and later signed an anti-union right-to-work law and a repeal of the prevailing wage. He then touted that anti-union record in his failed 2016 campaign for the

Republican nomination for president. Wisconsin voters finally had enough of his one-two combo of slashing corporate taxes and public school budgets, and voted by a narrow margin to elect state school superintendent Tony Evers, a former school teacher. Then there was

Rauner, a private equity fund billionaire who attacked public employee union members and their pensions immediately after taking office as Illinois governor in 2015. It was his federal lawsuit against public employee unions that became the notorious *Janus v AFSCME* case — in which the U.S. Supreme Court made America a "right-to-work" nation for public employees. Rauner was defeated by billionaire Democrat J.B. Pritzker in a campaign in which both candidates spent a considerable part of their fortune: Pritzker spent \$175 million, and Rauner \$50 million.

A UNION ORGANIZER GOES TO CONGRESS

Michigan voters elected a former union organizer to Congress. Andy Levin helped unionize health care workers into SEIU in the mid '80s, and later served on President Bill Clinton's labor law reform commission. At the national AFL-CIO, he set up the Union Summer and Voice@Work programs, and lobbied Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. Now he'll serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, in the Southeast Michigan seat formerly held by his father, Sander Levin.

'IRONSTACHE' COMES UP SHORT Union ironworker Randy "Ironstache" Bryce failed to win the seat vacated by Republican

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UA Local 290 retiree gives \$500,000 to Shriners Hospital

By Michael Gutwig

SPRINGFIELD, Ore. — More than 30 years after retiring, a working man who found success as a union welder is giving back in a very big way. Duke Mitchell — a member of United Association of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 — gave \$500,000 to the Shriners Hospitals for Children. The donation was made Nov. 5 at Local 290's Springfield training center, with several retired union brothers in attendance.

"This is not a common occurrence," said Kathy Park, director of development for Shriners Hospital-Portland. Shriners Hospitals for Children is an international nonprofit network of medical centers that specializes in care for children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries,

and cleft lip and palate, regardless of the families' ability to pay. Care is provided for newborns up to age 18. The Portland medical center boasts the largest team of pediatric orthopedic surgeons (12) in the Pacific Northwest.

Mitchell, 96, isn't a Shriner, and he wasn't familiar with the organization until a few months ago, when he saw a story about all the good things they do for children.

Mitchell said he and his wife of 72 years, Lucy Marie, often talked about donating some of their money to a good cause, but they hadn't decided on anything when she died in 2014.

After learning about the Shriners, Mitchell knew immediately where the money should go.

"My God, that's the greatest



UA Local 290 retiree Duke Mitchell worked, saved, and invested, and now, at 96, has set an extraordinary example of giving.

thing in the world you could do, — helping those little kids," he said. "What could you do that would be any greater than that? Nothing! Nothing!"

Duke Mitchell grew up in poverty, living out of a car in

Texas during the Great Depression with 11 sisters and his mother and father.

He learned to weld as a young man in Kansas. He joined the Chemical Workers Union in 1957 in New Mexico, and traveled the

country building chemical plants and industrial mills.

He landed in Springfield in 1960, where he joined what then was Fitters Local 481 (plumbers and fitters locals merged to form United Association Local 290 in July 1985). Mitchell served on the union's Executive Board and on numerous volunteer committees, including bargaining committees.

"Joining the union was the greatest thing that ever happened to me," Mitchell said.

Working under a union contract meant good benefits, a pension, job security, and good wages, Mitchell said — enough to take care of his wife and three children, with enough left over to invest in the stock market.

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