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**Office location:**  
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

**Mailing address:**  
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213

**Phone:** (503) 288-3311

**Web address:**  
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

**Editor & Manager:** Michael Gutwig  
**Senior staff reporter:** Don McIntosh  
**Office manager:** Cheri Rice

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# ...A night of wins for working people

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House Speaker Paul Ryan. Bryce originally ran to challenge Ryan, but in April, Ryan announced that he wouldn't seek re-election. In the end, Ryan's former staffer Brian Steila won the Republican-leaning district by 55 to 42 percent, after a well-funded campaign that skipped over bread-and-butter policy issues and focused instead on Bryce's past arrest for DUII and failure to pay child support.

**A 'RED FOR ED' WAVE IN TEACHER STRIKE STATES** Record numbers of teachers ran for office in Republican-led states where teachers struck for higher pay earlier this year, and on election night, some of them won. A least 19 current or former teachers won election to the Arizona Legislature (out of 51 who ran); at least 21 won election to the Arizona Legislature (out of 58); and at least 10 won election to the Kentucky Legislature (out of 36). However, teacher-union-backed Democratic candidates fell well short of winning governors races in Oklahoma and Arizona, and control of the state legislatures remained in Republican hands in West Virginia and Arizona. Arizona voters did overwhelmingly reject a ballot measure that would have expanded a program that allows families to pay for private school tuition with public funds.

## BALLOT MEASURES AROUND THE NATION

Voters in Republican-leaning states rejected the Republican agenda: They voted to raise the minimum wage and expand Medicaid. But voters around the country also rejected measures to tax the rich and tobacco, put a price on carbon, repeal a ban on rent control, and set nurse staffing ratios.

**RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE** Arkansas and Missouri voters passed big increases in the minimum wage. Arkansas' wage will rise to \$11 by 2021, affecting one quarter of the state's workers. Missouri's will rise to \$12 over the next five years, lifting standards for more than 675,000 workers.

**EXPAND MEDICAID** Voters in Idaho, Nebraska and Utah — heavily Republican states that Trump won easily in 2016 — approved citizen-led ballot measures to sign on to Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid. Medicaid — the government health insurance program for low-income Americans — has always combined state and federal funding, with the feds historically paying on average 57 percent. The Affordable Care Act of 2010 (popularly known as Obamacare) expanded Medicaid eligibility to all Americans up to 138 percent of the

federal poverty level, and the federal government paid 100 percent of the cost for those newly eligible, an amount that drops gradually to 90 percent in 2020. But a 2012 U.S. Supreme Court ruling made the Medicaid expansion optional for the states, and 17 Republican-dominated states refused to take part in it, turning away billions of dollars in federal aid and leaving millions of low-income Americans in those states uninsured. That's what voters in repudiated on Nov. 6 in the three states where they had the chance. As a result, an estimated 302,000 individuals in Idaho, Nebraska and Utah will now be eligible for Medicaid. In Montana, though, voters narrowly rejected a \$2 a pack cigarette tax to pay the state's portion of the Medicaid expansion, which covers 96,000 people. Montana's Republican legislature expanded Medicaid in 2015, but only for a four-year period that ends next July, and they haven't come up with the 10 percent match to extend it. Hospitals stepped up and sponsored ballot measure I-185 as one solution. Tobacco companies spent \$17 million opposing it — in a state with fewer than 200,000 smokers.

**END FORCED PRISON LABOR** Colorado voters approved Amendment A by nearly 65 percent, ending a provision in the Colorado state constitution that says prisoners can be forced to do unpaid

labor as part of their punishment.

**TAX THE RICH AND CORPORATIONS TO PAY FOR SCHOOLS? NO** Colorado voters rejected Amendment 73 by a 55-to-45 percent margin. Backed by unions, the measure would have raised \$1.6 billion for schools by increasing income taxes to 5 and 8.25 percent for people earning above \$150,000 per year, and increasing the corporate tax rate to 6 percent. The state currently has a flat tax rate of 4.63 percent on all incomes, personal or corporate. Meanwhile, voters in North Carolina actually lowered the top income tax rate.

**CAP INTEREST ON PAYDAY LOANS** Colorado Proposition 111, which passed with 77 percent support, restricts interest on payday loans to an annual rate of 36 percent and eliminates all other finance charges and fees.

**SET NURSE-PATIENT RATIOS? NOPE** Nurse-union-backed Massachusetts Question 1 would have limited the number of patients hospital nurses could be assigned. Led by the Massachusetts Nurses Association, measure supporters spent more than \$10.6 million but the hospital industry spent over \$26 million opposing it, and voters rejected the measure by 70 percent.

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Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family

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