

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Why I'm happy about 2018

2018 will be viewed as a pivotal year for the American labor movement. From the U.S. Supreme Court's highly anticipated *Janus* decision to a historic midterm election, working people stood together and demonstrated why collective action works.

The year 2018 began with a report from the U.S. Department of Labor that for the first time in this century, union membership grew — by 262,000. Organizing is up across the board: Oregon's union membership grew by 34,000 members. In Texas, where public sector collective bargaining is illegal, membership grew by 80,000. This membership growth coincided with polling released in the fall of 2017 revealing 60 percent of Americans would join a union if given a chance.

Oregon's organizing escalated in 2018. Nearly a thousand workers in behavioral health non-profits, graduate students at OHSU, and temporary and on-call workers at Multnomah County entered the union movement by standing together to join AFSCME. Over a thousand faculty at Oregon State University and Oregon Institute of Technology stood strong and joined AFT-Oregon. Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals increased member-

ship through organizing health care workers. Machinists gained national attention by helping welders at Precision Castparts form their union and weather an onslaught of appeals by the employer. Burgerville workers organized historic unions at three shops. In May the Portland City Council passed a resolution sponsored by the Oregon AFL-CIO to implement a Drivers Board to address Lyft and Uber driver issues — a step forward to give drivers a voice.

We beat back attacks on health care. The 2017 Oregon Legislature provided funding to continue health coverage for 1 million Oregonians through the Oregon Health Plan, almost half of whom are children. A group headed by Rep. Julie Parrish was successful in gathering enough signatures to place the Oregon Health Plan funding package on the ballot for a January 28 special election. A coordinated effort by Oregon's union movement, health care organizations, and businesses upheld the funding measure with over 60 percent voter support.

We defended our rights as workers to have strong unions. In June the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on *Janus v. AFSCME*, effectively ending the requirement of represented public employees

to pay fees to administer their contract. The now-infamous Freedom Foundation predicted the end of public sector unions, thinking workers would flock to drop their membership. But a massive drop in membership just hasn't happened because Oregon's union movement has been preparing for an anti-worker Supreme Court decision for years. Oregon AFL-CIO Chief of Staff Graham Trainor led the effort to assist and provide resources for internal organizing. Some unions changed their structures to more directly communicate with membership. By strengthening the relationship with members, unions inoculated against the misinformation presented by the Freedom Foundation.

America watched as educators marched across the nation from West Virginia to Arizona to Washington State for better pay, benefits and increased education funding. The courage of these actions captured the hearts and minds of the American public. This fever of renewed activism was not limited to educators: workers stood together and spoke up through bargaining, strike votes, and strikes. Workers spoke out: dissatisfied with wage stagnation and shrinking benefits while more and more of the wealth of our na-

tion is enjoyed by a select few.

Renewed American activism played a huge role in the 2018 November elections. A historic number of working people, women, and people of color ran for office. Volunteers flooded the streets, phone/text banks and worksites to elect candidates who shared their views. In Oregon we defeated ballot measures that would have limited women's access to health care, overturned Oregon's Sanctuary Status, and created tax loopholes for big business. We re-elected Gov. Kate Brown and gained supermajorities in the Oregon House and Senate.

In Lane County we replaced anti-worker County Commissions with pro-worker commissioners. Central to all those wins were dedicated union volunteers stepping up and working hard.

2018 was a year where working people proved that if we are bold enough, tough enough, and strategic enough we can change our state and nation from one that is focused on an agenda that rewards the rich and powerful to one that gives opportunity to all.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

Nabisco back at the table with Bakers

The deep freeze between the Bakers union and Mondelez-Nabisco may be about to thaw. The union represents 2,200 workers at Nabisco's five U.S. plants (including about 200 workers at Nabisco's Portland Bakery) and three distribution centers, but they've been working without a new collective bargaining agreement since their previous one expired Feb. 29, 2016. In May 2018, the company unilaterally implemented parts of what it called its final offer, giving 2.25 percent raises, but also withdrawing from the union-sponsored multiemployer pension.

But in October and November, the two sides met for bargaining for the first time in more than two years. Nate



Bakers Local 364 member Paul Brock was part of a Dec. 8 demonstration outside the palatial Northwest Portland home of Mondelez-Nabisco board member Christiana Shi. Local union members hold her and other board members responsible for the company's decision — over union objections — to withdraw from the Bakers-sponsored multiemployer pension in May.

Zeff, assistant to the union's strategic campaign coordinator, told the *Labor Press* he's optimistic about possible progress in the talks. Zeff said at a daylong meeting in Octo-

ber, the Bakers Union put forward a detailed new proposal to resolve the pension dispute.

The two sides expect to meet again in January.



BUNCO RAISES \$500 FOR PRESENTS FROM PARTNERS.

LegalShield's Ladies of Justice sponsored a "Bunco for Presents from Partners" fundraiser in Gladstone, Oregon, Nov. 28. Presents from Partners is a holiday party sponsored by Labor's Community Service Agency for families who are going through difficult times (See Page 1). One feature of the party is a "Parent's Room," which is sponsored by IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union. The parents' room gives kids the opportunity to pick out a gift and wrap it for their parents and/or guardians. Money raised at the bunco party went specifically to the parents' room. Barbara Mathey, CEO of the credit union, attended the bunco fundraiser. Kathy Maher of LegalShield coordinated the bunco event, which raised \$500.