

UNION DEMOCRACY

AFT-Oregon elects new leadership

AFT-Oregon, a state council of the American Federation of Teachers, elected new leadership at its May 3-5 convention in Sunriver, Oregon.

Portland Community College employee Jaime Rodriguez was elected president without opposition. He succeeds David Rives, who has been president since 2009. [The union's constitution limits a president to five two-year terms.]

AFT-Oregon serves about 9,100 members in 21 locals. Members include community college and university faculty, and classified support staff at colleges and K-12 school districts.

Rodriguez grew up in California's Central Valley as the son of farmworkers, and was the first in his family to graduate from college, earning a degree from Fresno State University. He served in the Army and the National Guard. Since 1999, he's worked as a career coach at Portland Community College, and has helped hundreds of veterans and people on public assistance get training so they can enter the workforce.



Jaime Rodriguez

He's also been a very active member of Portland Community College Federation of Faculty and Academic Professionals (PCCFFAP), AFT Local 2277, and has served on union contract negotiation teams, as local vice president, and as vice president for political action for AFT-Oregon.

AFT-Oregon president is a full-time salaried position, overseeing about a dozen union staffers.

Rodriguez told the Labor Press he hopes to increase member engagement with more outreach and organizing.

Also elected at the convention:

- **Executive Vice President** Jeff Grider, PCC Federation of Faculty and Academic Professionals, 3922
- **Treasurer** Melody Hansen, Hillsboro Classified United (HCU), Local 4671
- **Secretary** Shaun Cain, Eastern Oregon University Associated Academic Professionals (AAP), Local 6200
- **Vice President of Political Action** Kayleigh Peterman, University of Oregon Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), Local 3544

Together with the president,

these four make up AFT-Oregon's executive committee.

Delegates also elected 10 at large vice presidents:

- Ira Erbs - Portland Community College Federation of Faculty and Academic Professionals (PCCFFAP), Local 2277.
- Chloe Hughes - Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers (WOUFT), Local 2278
- Michael Hames-Garcia, United Academics, University of Oregon, Local 3209
- Mike Magee, University of Oregon Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), Local 3544
- Ariana Jacob, Portland State University Faculty Association (PSUFA), Local 3571
- Anastasia Hernandez-Vasquez, Hillsboro Classified United (HCU), Local 4671
- Hazel Daniels, Oregon State University Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE), Local 6069
- Anna St. Lorenz, OSU Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE), Local 6069
- DeAnna Timmerman, Eastern Oregon University Associated Academic Professionals (AAP), Local 6200
- Ted Cooper, PSU Coalition of Graduate Employees, no assigned local number yet.

The vice presidents, plus the executive committee, make up AFT-Oregon's executive council. All offices are for a two year term that begins July 21.

...Cornman

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involvement. The case went all the way to Washington, D.C. Because the union campaign at the mine was by now basically kaput, the USW organizer told Cornman to accept a sizable back pay settlement offer, which the company offered on condition that he not return to the mine. But now Cornman found he was blackballed by other mines in the area, and with three kids and a wife to support, he decided it was time to return home to Oregon.

After operating heavy construction equipment a few years, he got a job at Portland's Freightliner truck plant in 1992. Working the assembly line for truck chassis, he became an active member of his Machinists Local Lodge 1005, and soon, an elected shop steward and member of the negotiating committee. He started sitting in on Executive Board meetings, and ran for and won an election for union trustee. He became a delegate to the

larger Machinists District Lodge 24 and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

In 2002, Cornman became an apprentice union organizer with the Grand Lodge — as the Machinists international parent organization is known. He spent two years in Washington and Nevada supporting union campaigns among aerospace workers, auto dealer mechanics, and workers at a U-haul trailer repair facility in Henderson, Nevada. At that last campaign, Cornman recalls, the owner said he'd shutter the facility rather than go union, and illegally fired more than 50 workers.

Returning home to work at the truck plant, Cornman was approached to join a reform slate of candidates for business representative in Machinists District Lodge 24; the others were Bob Petroff, Joe Kear, Scott Lucy and Phil Dilsaver. All five were elected in 2005. Cornman has continued to serve as a business representative ever since, responsible for negotiating and enforcing union contracts at as many as 19 workplaces over the years. In

2011, District Lodge 24 merged with Woodworkers District Lodge W1 to become Machinists District Lodge W24. In August 2016, Cornman was appointed assistant directing business representative, the number two position at the district lodge. In December, he won re-election to the position for a three-year term.

He also served on the Executive Board of Oregon AFL-CIO, on the advisory board of the University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center (LERC), and as a trustee on the Nelson Trust, which provides health coverage to about 5,000 woodworkers and their families. But in his 14 years on staff at the Machinists District Lodge, Cornman says what gave him the most satisfaction was having helped half a dozen of his fellow union members get their jobs back after they were terminated.

Cornman's assignment for the last three years has been representing workers at Boeing's Gresham plant. To take over that responsibility, the District Lodge is hiring Carol Krohn, the chief shop steward at the plant.

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



How inclusive movements build power

While America has always been a divided nation based on our identities, it seems that these identifications are super-charged today. We identify ourselves racially, economically, politically, by gender and sexuality. Donald Trump seems gleeful to use intentionally explosive words to create further and wider divisions. These loaded words embolden groups to exploit and vilify large segments of our society.

Since the formation of our nation, divisions of identity groups have pitted one group of workers against another. Whether it has been the color of one's skin, the country or origin, the god one chooses, treating women as second class citizens, or one's sexuality — division among the working class is a means to build power and a way to advance an agenda that hasn't been in the best interest of the majority of Americans. We have to realize that these divisions are used as a smoke screen to divert the attention of the electorate.

In 1968, Nixon played to the white voters in the south who opposed the 1964 and 1968 passage of the Civil Rights Act. Reagan used similar tactics to defeat Jimmy Carter. Bush I and II used the diversionary tactic of focusing on same sex marriage to divide working people. Trump's success in scapegoating immigrants, objectifying women and alienating communities of color, sadly led him to the White House.

In this era of Trump-style diversionary tactics that have emboldened hate groups, it is more important than ever that the union movement is solidly the most safe and welcoming place we have for all workers. Our workers reflect the full diversity of America. Today's union leaders must understand this diversity and embrace measures, trainings and programs that address workplace and living issues equitably for all workers.

For example, transgender issues have become more pronounced over the last several years as workers find the courage to speak out about their identities. If unions are to be inclusive organizations, these workers need to feel totally safe and welcome. Our responsibility is to work with our transgender members and develop programs that fully educate our leadership and members.

Over the last 14 years, the Oregon AFL-CIO has been on the forefront of moving forward with difficult and ground breaking issues. We have partnered with CAUSA on addressing immigration issues and working to pass the Workplace Fairness Act which:

- Prevents employers from asking for nondisclosure agreements that relate to discrimination at the time of hiring, during settlement and during severance negotiations;
- Prevents employers from requesting provisions that prevent the rehiring of previously discriminated-against employees during settlement agreements;
- Extends the statute of limitations for discrimination in employment situations from one to five years;
- Directs BOLI to create policies and procedures for employers/employees that relate to sexual harassment; and
- Ensures that where employers have made a good faith determination that harassment has occurred, any severance given to the harasser, if an executive, is rendered unenforceable.

Our union movement must be constantly evolving to meet the needs of our diverse membership. Not only must we develop trainings, but we must incorporate these lessons into our summits, conferences, conventions, and ourselves. It is our job to take on any and all issues that impact workers. We build power for our worker's movement when we recognize and embrace our diversity. It is our strength not our weakness.

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