

Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President



Thank you, Now let's get to work!

I am humbled and honored to serve Oregon workers as your new president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your confidence, support, and solidarity as we fight for a fairer and more just economy that lifts up ALL workers.

Tom and Barbara set the bar high for our movement, ensuring the Oregon AFL-CIO was in a strong position to help lead the fights for workers of the future and support the fights of our affiliate unions and their members as well. They did that throughout their careers with grit, determination, and an unwavering commitment to justice. Oregon workers are far better off thanks to their leadership, and I am eternally grateful.

It's hard for me to think of a time in my career that is more exciting to be a part of the Union Movement. Despite the endless challenges facing working people within the rigged economic system we are all fighting, the opportunities for building working class power and solidarity are also endless. Just take a moment and look around at the breadth of collective action we're seeing and, more importantly, the results.

Look at the over 20,000 retail workers and members of UFCW Local 555 who put it all on the line for fairness, dignity, and respect... and won. They not only won a fair settlement that reflects the hard work and value they bring to their employers, they won on addressing the gender pay gap that has been increasingly prevalent in their industry.

Look at the nearly 7,000 workers at Oregon Health and Science University who mobilized thousands of allies and community members in their fight for a fair and equitable contract... and won. These members of AFSCME Local 328 have helped make OHSU the incredible institution that it is, and their settlement ensures their hard and important work is valued.

Look at the thousands of university workers and Kaiser Permanente workers who all demanded respect and dignity in their contracts... and won.

Look through your newsfeed and you'll see examples of workers in every corner of our country and in every sector of our nation's economy — from General Motors plants, to hotel chains, to Mack Truck factories, workers who are fed up and doing something about it.

If pushed to the brink, these workers are willing to strike. The mainstream media would have you believe that workers carelessly vote to strike and do so with reckless abandon. However, workers on a UAW picket line are receiving just \$275 per week while the strike lasts. That doesn't cut it. It doesn't pay the bills, yet they are holding strong and fighting for something larger than themselves.

Our movement is one of the working class, a bold and inclusive movement that fights for any worker, no matter who they love or where they were born, and we are winning. It gives me so much hope for the future of our united workers' movement.

Keep fighting! See you in the streets.

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

...Byrd retires

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and to deal with the budget shortfall, had made secretary-treasurer an unpaid position. Byrd, with a flexible academic job and wide familiarity within union leaders at all levels, agreed to step in. It was the first time a woman had held the office.

At the Oregon AFL-CIO, Byrd became a persistent advocate that organized labor engage with environmental groups — to ensure that when environmental legislation passes, it benefits, and doesn't harm, Oregon workers. In 2007 she helped set up an Oregon chapter of the Apollo Alliance, a labor-environmental coalition, which later merged into the similar Blue-Green Alliance. In 2009 she

took part in the United Nations climate summit in Copenhagen. And for years she worked behind the scenes to make sure labor was in the room when climate policy was being discussed by elected leaders. The culmination of that work was in this year's "cap-and-invest" bill, which contains stronger labor standards than any other legislation in the nation. The bill failed, but could come up again next year.

Byrd also made women's empowerment a priority. In 2017 she helped form the group Oregon Women Labor Leaders. It started with informal get-togethers of female union activists. Talking about difficulties they faced, like not being listened to

by their male union counterparts, they found they weren't alone. National AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Liz Shuler came to Oregon for their first official meeting. This year, the group waged its first full-on campaign, with well-attended public actions to pressure Fred Meyer to address a gender pay gap.

Though Byrd is now doubly retired, she says she isn't gone yet. She'll teach a few more classes at LERC, and hopes to stay involved with labor environmental work.

The seeds she planted — skilling up union leaders and encouraging labor to fight for green jobs and gender equality — will bear fruit for years to come.

OSEA won't support legislators who voted for PERS reduction bill

The Oregon School Employees Association's (OSEA) Board of Directors voted unanimously Oct. 4, not to endorse any legislator in the 2020 election cycle who voted to support Senate Bill 1049 in the last session of the Oregon Legislature.

SB 1049 made changes to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), some of which resulted in dramatic reductions to the pensions that public employees will receive.

"PERS is a benefit that was promised to public employees, including OSEA members," said OSEA President Lisa Gourley. "Many candidates campaigned on guarantees to protect our pensions during the 2018 election, only to vote to cut those same pensions the following spring. We rely on those pensions, and we will not forget this."

OSEA represents about 20,000 public and private employees working in Oregon school districts, community colleges, education service districts, Head Start agencies, libraries, and park and recreation districts.

OSEA is part of Keep Oregon's Promise, a coalition of organizations that is suing the state over portions of SB 1049, which are considered an unconstitutional breach of contract.

Earlier, Oregon AFSCME and the Oregon AFL-CIO took action to restrict contributions and support for legislators who voted for SB 1049. AFSCME represents 26,000 public employees.

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