



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

Women's fighting spirit

March is Women's History Month, a dedicated time to honor the many contributions women have made to improve our society. The history of the Labor Movement was written by and continues to be driven by leadership and courageous actions of women. Looking back at the moments which defined Labor in America, poignant parallels can be drawn between the fierce women leaders of our past and the path we are on today.

The first union of working women in our country was formed in Lowell, Massachusetts. Described by the bosses as "a spirit of evil omen," the women workers of the Lowell textile mills went on strike in 1834, and again in 1836 to oppose pay cuts and rent hikes. The "Lowell Mill Girls," as they were known, were fierce organizers and used the mills' lodging houses to their advantage while building support for strikes and eventually

political mobilization efforts – before women had the right to vote in the United States.

The first strike in Lowell in 1834 failed, but the "Mill Girls" persisted by building power on the shop floor and gathering support within their community. When the bosses called for further cuts to pay and rent increases in 1836, the women of Lowell went into action: forming the Factory Girls' Association and recruiting nearly twice the number of workers to strike as they had just two years prior. 1,500 workers participated in the work stoppage, which combined with massive community support and outrage over the rent hike meant the mills were running at significantly lower capacity. The bosses called off the rent hike as a result.

Lowell was a spark, setting off a combustion which continues to burn almost 200 years later. As the years

have gone by, the fire of organizing to build power for working people has been doused with the water of corporate greed. It has been stomped upon by the boots of the wealthy as they buy politicians' votes. And yet the fire remains because women workers are still not treated equally. Rising from embers to become flames of collective action that continue to forge new chapters in the books of history, women are at the helm of many of the unions and actions grabbing headlines and tearing down barriers to prosperity for all working people.

In many ways, we have come so far since the women of Lowell walked out of the mills on a cold spring morning in 1834. But the power struggle which spurred the women of Lowell to act has not changed. Corporate profits soar on the wings of labor's toil. The bosses protect the status quo, and only relents to progress at the behest of workers' voices speaking loudly in unison demanding change. Even then, our opponents are well funded and well connected, but as the women of Lowell show us, we know we can turn the tide of history through collective action, following the lead of women that are being impacted by injustice and

through the power of standing together.

In Oregon and across the country, women are leading incredible campaigns and actions to build a fair and just economy for all working people. I'm immensely proud to be able to work with the women who lead unions in Oregon, who run powerful advocacy organizations, and who are in the trenches of our Movement's fights. From the Oregon Womxn Labor Leaders invoking the image of Rosie the Riveter to call out Fred Meyer for pay inequity last summer to the women on our latest 2020 Election Endorsements list running for office, we are made better by the leadership, courage and fighting spirit of women.

The women of Lowell, like the women pushing the Labor Movement to new heights today, understand that when we stand together and speak against injustice, great things can happen. As Women's History Month continues, I encourage you to find your own source of inspiration in the history books, in today's headlines and in your own community.

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

Oregon AFL-CIO announces May primary endorsements

The Oregon AFL-CIO has endorsed Shemia Fagan in the May 19 Democratic primary for secretary of state. The action was taken March 6 at the labor federation's Committee on Political Education (COPE) board meeting. It takes a two-thirds majority to endorse a candidate.

Fagan, a state senator representing District 24, is among three Democrats running for the post now held by Republican Bev Clarno. The others are state Sen. Mark Hass of Beaverton, and Jamie McLeod-Skinner, a former congressional candidate

who hails from Terrebonne.

State Sen. Kim Thatcher (Dist. 13), is the only Republican to file for the position.

Clarno, was appointed to the seat March 31, 2019, to finish the term of Republican Dennis Richardson, who died in office. Democratic Gov. Kate Brown made the appointment under the stipulation that Clarno would not run for re-election.

COPE endorsed the re-election of U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (CD 1), Earl Blumenauer (CD 3), and Peter

DeFazio (CD 4). They took no action in Congressional Districts 2 and 5. In District 5, incumbent Kurt Schrader is facing a challenge from Milwaukie Mayor Mark Gamba. In District 2, long-time incumbent Republican Greg Walden isn't seeking re-election.

In statewide races, the Oregon AFL-CIO endorsed the re-election of Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, and Treasurer Tobias Read.

They also are backing the "Yes for a Healthy Future" ballot measure.

The state labor federation also endorsed Deb Patterson, Senate District 10; Kate Lieber, Senate District 14; Kathleen Taylor, incumbent, Senate District 21; Chris Gorsek, Senate District 25; Paul Evans, incumbent, House District 20; Winsvey Campos, House District 28; Christina Stephenson, House District 33; Dacia Grayber, House District 35; Laurie Wimmer, House District 36; Rachel Prusak, incumbent, House District 37; Khanh Pham, House District 46; and Ricki Ruiz, House District 50.

In addition to these endorsements, several elected officials from both parties received a conditional endorsement that will be finalized once a completed candidate questionnaire is received.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Graham Trainor said COPE did not endorse or support any lawmaker who voted against Oregon's public workers by supporting Senate Bill 1049, or against high road labor standards on subsidized development by voting against HB 2408 during the 2019 Legislative Session.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

SPEEA workers at Boeing split in narrow votes on contract extension

Two bargaining units of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) at Boeing Company will be covered by significantly different collective bargaining agreements for at least the next two years, after engineers voted to accept a four-year contract extension and technical workers voted to reject it. SPEEA is affiliated as Local 2001 of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE).

In a March 9 press release announcing the results, SPEEA said engineers approved their agreement by a vote of 3,837 to 3,658. Casting ballots on a similar agreement, technical workers rejected their contract offer by a vote of 1,268 to 1,654.

The contracts cover 12,764 engineers in the professional unit and 4,705 workers in the technical unit. While the majority of covered employees are in the Puget Sound region of

Washington state, the contracts also cover SPEEA-represented employees in Oregon, Utah and California.

The result gives engineers a new contract that SPEEA says corrects issues with salary raise pools and provides parental leave and access to Washington's Paid Family and Medical Leave program. The new agreement takes effect immediately and runs until Oct. 6, 2026.

Technical workers remain

covered by their existing contract, which remains in place until Oct. 6, 2022.

Highlights of the ratified agreement:

Annual salary adjustment Boeing and SPEEA will establish fixed salary adjustment funds for each year, 2020 through 2026, replacing the prior indexed formula.

Paid leave Boeing will apply the company's existing 12-week Paid Parental Leave policy to SPEEA engineers. By virtue of the

contract extension, SPEEA engineers in Washington will now also be covered by the Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave Act.

Health benefits No change in plan design for medical, dental and vision plans. Beginning 2023, employees' contributions will be based upon their salary.

Employee Incentive Plan (EIP) The Employee Incentive Plan target will be raised from 3.85% of eligible earnings to 5% of eligible earnings.