



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

It's all on the line on November 3

It's a familiar refrain this time of year: "This is the most important election of our lifetime." Every two years, with political campaigns in high gear, the urgency builds after Labor Day to fill the thousands of volunteer shifts needed to communicate with union members and win on election day. While that phrase is at times overused, it is always rooted in the utter seriousness of the choices that working people have as they receive and fill out their ballots. These choices matter to our pocketbooks, to the health of our families and our democracy, and to our vision of shared prosperity and equity.

Whether we're political junkies or feel totally overwhelmed by or uninterested in politics, the outcomes of every election make a difference in the lives of working people. The economy is just a set of rules that can be rewritten if we build the urgency and necessity for our leaders to act, and that starts with who we elect.

There's no question that this election year is different. Working people have shouldered the brunt of a deadly pandemic, an economic freefall, and an unprecedented wildfire season, all amidst a critical discussion about racial injustice and police brutality in our communities.

Understandably, we're tired, we're stressed, we're concerned for the health of our families, and we're a bit distracted from the election.

At the same time, Corporate America is desperately hoping we sit this one out. They see what's on the line in a few weeks, what's possible if working people prevail at the ballot box. And they will continue to do everything in their power to divide, distract, and disenfranchise us right up until November 3.

In the labor movement, we know that our people-powered strength is derived from our diverse membership and the grassroots power we harness when we put our minds towards a shared vision. Our movement never backs down, always gets up, and continues to fight for a fair and just economy and society for all, regardless of the odds.

This election cycle needs that strength and attention from our movement to win for working families, perhaps more than ever. From the top to the bottom of our ballots, the choices working people make on Election Day will impact the direction of our nation, our state, and our communities.

Will we continue to tolerate leadership from the White House that constantly

sows hate, division, and discord, with a clear goal of dividing the working class and undermining our unions? Or will we be a nation that values the dignity of all hard-working Americans, understands the importance of a strong labor movement to a healthy economy, and believes in a unified, shared vision of prosperity?

Will we allow the Republican majority in the U. S. Senate to continue blocking pro-worker, pro-democracy, progressive legislation passed by the U.S. House while abdicating their responsibility to prioritize vital funding for state and local governments during a deadly global pandemic and economic collapse? Or will we have a U. S. Congress that prioritizes making the lives of hard working Americans better by fixing our broken labor laws and passing a significant COVID-19 relief and recovery bill?

At the state level, will our secretary of state—our chief elections officer and effectively Oregon's lieutenant governor—be someone who disguises herself as a moderate despite her consistently far-right, anti-union voting record? Or will we choose Shemia Fagan as Oregon's next secretary of state, someone who knows what it's like to experience homelessness, has spent her entire career

in public service fighting for working Oregonians, and has even stood up against her own party when they rammed through PERS reforms in 2019?

And will Corporate Oregon continue to gain in-roads and influence on their path to eroding worker protections and undermining our movement in the state Legislature? Or will we strengthen a pro-union, pro-worker culture and deepen the bench of union members and working family champions holding office?

To me, the choices are as clear and important as ever. We have always known that when union members vote for labor's endorsed candidates, *all* working families win. This year however, as the labor movement has stepped up to protect and defend all workers during the pandemic and fill the void left from a complete failure of leadership from the White House, the need for worker-centered leadership at all levels of elected office couldn't be more serious.

Check out labor's endorsements at orafclcio.org/endorsements, and vote like your job, your family's well-being, and the future of our democracy depends on it. Because this year it truly does.

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