

A LABOR MOVEMENT LOOK AT THE 2020 ELECTION RESULTS

OREGON

In Oregon, voter turnout set an all-time record high, with 2.4 million ballots cast and 81.2% of registered voters returning their ballots. Oregon's labor movement tallied both wins and losses.

BALLOT MEASURES

As is so often the case in Oregon, some of the most impactful votes were on ballot measures. Union-backed Ballot Measure 110, which **decriminalizes drug possession** and aims to make drug treatment available on demand, won with 59% support. Voters also approved, by 67%, Measure 108's \$2-per-pack increase in **cigarette taxes** to fund health care and tobacco prevention, and by 56% a measure **legalizing the supervised therapeutic use of psychoactive mushrooms**; both measures also had some union support.

The most consequential measure may end up being Measure 107, which allows **limits to political campaign contributions**. The Oregon Supreme Court has historically treated money in politics as protected free speech, with the result that Oregon politics swims in money, almost more than any other state. Roughly \$2.7 million was contributed in the Senate District 10 contest between Deb Patterson and Denyc Boles, to influence just under 68,000 votes, coming to almost \$40 per vote. Oregon is one of just 5 states that doesn't limit political donations. With Oregonians having voted resoundingly (79%) to amend the Constitution to allow it, the Legislature will now have a chance to impose reasonable limits.

Portland-area ballot measures were also mostly wins for local unions: A levy to support operations at **Portland parks** and recreation centers passed by 64%, and will result in restoration of jobs for members of Laborers Local 483. A **Multnomah County Library bond** to build a new library in Gresham passed by 60%. And a \$310 million **Portland Public Schools bond** renewal to rebuild and retrofit schools passed by 75%.

The most momentous local ballot measure win is likely to be Multnomah County's **Preschool For All** measure. Approved by 64% of county voters, it will raise \$132 million a

year to make tuition-free preschool available to all Multnomah County 3- and 4-year-olds in the years to come, funded by an income tax on the highest income county residents. It will also more than double wages for preschool teachers and assistants, and guarantee their unobstructed right to unionize.

But labor's big loss was Measure 26-218. The **Metro transportation bond** would have raised \$4 billion through a 0.75% payroll tax for road, light rail, and other transportation investments, securing an estimated 37,500 construction jobs in the economically uncertain years ahead. It failed, with 46% support, despite \$1.3 million in support from unions, union contractors, and a coalition of community and environmental groups. IBEW and Operating Engineers each contributed \$100,000, and cash and in-kind contributions from UFCW Local 555 totaled \$73,000. But businesses, particularly Nike and Intel, spent over \$2 million campaigning against the measure, and flooded mailboxes and media with efforts to label the payroll tax as a "wage tax." Adding to the sting, union-backed political nonprofit Our Oregon supported the measure, but the "Stop the Metro Wage Tax" campaign was overseen by its former director, political operative Kevin Looper.

CONGRESS

Union leaders worried that longtime pro-labor Democrat **Peter DeFazio** might lose to well-funded celebrity challenger Alek Skarlatos. But in the end DeFazio won reelection with 52% of the vote despite \$4.5 million in mostly out-of-state money backing Skarlatos, a National Guard member who came to fame for helping stop a terrorist on a train while on vacation in France.

The other labor-endorsed incumbent Democrats—Senator **Jeff Merkley** and U.S. Representatives **Earl Blumenauer** and **Suzanne Bonamici**—won easily.

OREGON LEGISLATURE

Hopes of securing a walkout-proof Democratic majority in the Oregon House and Senate appeared to come up short. The Republican minority has walked out of the Oregon Legislature four times in the last two years, stopping all legislation from passing. They're able to do that because of an unusual quorum clause in the Oregon Constitution that requires two-thirds of lawmakers to be present in order for any bill to be considered. Going into election day, Democrats held an 18-12 majority in the state senate and a 38-22 majority in the house, so to prevent the walkouts without changing the state constitution, they'd have to pick up two seats in each chamber. Instead, they held steady in the senate and lost one seat in the house.

STATE SENATE Democrats broke even, gaining a seat in Salem, but losing one on the Southern Oregon coast. They'll have a 18-12 majority next year when the new legislature is seated. SEIU Local 503 member and Oregon Labor Candidate School graduate **Deb Patterson** beat Republican incumbent Denyc Boles in Senate District 10 (Salem). But in Senate District 5 (Coos Bay), Democrat **Melissa Cribbins** came 2 points short of Republican Dick Anderson in the race to succeed Democrat Arnie Roblan. Meanwhile, in Senate District 27 (Bend), union-



backed Democratic challenger **Eileen Kiely** came just 1,500 votes short of defeating Republican incumbent Tim Knopp, who also had some union support.

STATE HOUSE Democrats gained a seat in Bend, but lost two on the Oregon coast, ending with a 37-22 majority. The pick-up was House District 54 (Bend), where Democrat **Jason Kropf** beat incumbent Republican Cheri Helt. Labor also celebrated an easy 68% win by firefighters union activist and Oregon Labor Candidates School graduate **Dacia Grayber** in House District 35 (Tigard). And union nurse **Rachel Prusak** won re-election with 60% against a well-funded Republican challenger. But Oregon Labor Candidates School graduate **Jackie Leung** got just 47% in her challenge to

incumbent Republican Raquel Moore-Green in House District 19 (Salem). Democrat **Lynnette Shaw** got 42% in her challenge to Republican Ron Noble in House District 24 (McMinnville). Worse yet, labor-backed Democrats lost two seats that had been held by Democrats who chose not to run again. AFSCME member **Debbie Boothe-Schmidt** fell short with 46% for the seat in House District 32 (Astoria) that was held by SEIU member Tiffany Mitchell. And Democrat **Cal Mukamoto** got 42% in the race to succeed Democrat Caddy McKeown in House District 9 (Coos Bay). Meanwhile **Ash-ton Simpson**, backed by five unions and running on the Working Families Party ballot line, got just 19% in his challenge to incumbent Democrat Diego Hernandez in East Portland's House District 47; Hernandez faces allegations of sexual and workplace harassment, and didn't actively campaign, but won 50% of the vote; Republican Ryan Gardner got 31%. In what proved to be the closest race in the House, incumbent Democrat and former union official **Brad Witt** came within 1 percentage point and 500 votes of losing to challenger Brian Stout in House District 31 (Clatskanie).

STATEWIDE

Labor celebrated **Shemia Fagan's** strong win for Oregon Secretary of State (51%, against 43% for Republican Kim Thatcher). Fagan has been a union ally and a bold figure in Oregon politics; now she'll be in charge of enforcing election laws and auditing state agencies, and next in line for governor in case of a vacancy. The other two statewide races were won by union-endorsed Democratic incumbents: State Treasurer **Tobias Read** (52%) and Attorney General **Ellen Rosenblum** (57%).

LOCAL

Labor organizations issued endorsements in nearly 50 nonpartisan county, city, and local races in Oregon. Some of the biggest:

METRO Union-backed candidates prevailed: **Gerritt Rosenthal** in District 3

(SW) with 52%, and **Mary Nolan** in District 5 (N/NE/NW) with 62%.

COUNTIES In Washington County, union-endorsed Nafisa Fai won with 58%, securing a narrow majority for more pro-labor policies; and in Lane County, union-backed Laurie Trieger won a commission seat with 54%. But in Clackamas County, incumbent **Ken Humberston** lost in a close race against a well-funded challenge by Mark Shull. In Columbia County, union-backed incumbent commissioner **Alex Tardif** was defeated by Casey Garrett, a county parks director who's had run-ins with employees and the county union. And in Marion County, **Ashley Carson Cottingham** fell short with 45%.

PORTLAND Union-backed incumbent mayor **Ted Wheeler** won with 46%

of the vote, ahead of challenger Sarah Iannarone (41%) and a write-in effort that may have reached 13% for Teresa Raiford. Meanwhile, **Mingus Mapps** beat incumbent Chloe Eudaly 56-43; each had union support, but Mapps had more.

BEAVERTON Challenger **Lacey Beaty** got 53% and beat longtime mayor Denny Doyle; both had union support, but Beaty had more.

GRESHAM A union-backed slate contended for all open positions. **Dina DiNucci** and **Vince Jones Dixon** won, but **Dave Dyk** lost, and the mayor's race was coming down to the wire, with union-endorsed Gresham councilman **Eddy Morales** trailing TriMet board member Travis Stovall by just 57 votes at press time.

WASHINGTON

Voter turnout set a record: 73.28%.

In the Congressional District 3 race in Southwest Washington, union-backed Democratic challenger **Carolyn Long** once again fell short of unseating Republican Jaime Herrera-Beutler; Long finished with 45% support, less than the 47% she got in 2018.

In statewide races, labor-backed incumbent Democrats easily won election, including Gov. **Jay Inslee** (58%), state auditor **Pat McCarthy** (60%), and attorney general **Bob Ferguson** (58%). In open seats, labor-backed

candidates **Mike Pellicciotti** won for treasurer (55%), **Chris Reykdal** for superintendent of public instruction (56%), and **Hilary Franz** for public lands commissioner (58%), but **Gael Tarleton** lost to Republican Kim Wyman for secretary of state. For lieutenant governor, where both candidates had union support, **Denny Heck** outpolled Marko Liias 47-34.

In the state Legislature, Democrats looked likely to add several state House seats and three state Senate seats, but also lost one in Southwest Washington.

In Legislative District 17 (Eastside Vancouver), **Daniel Smith** fell short with 47% in an effort to unseat incum-



backed Democratic challengers fell short: **Rick Bell** (43% against state senator Ann Rivers), and **Kassandra Bessert** (41%) and **Donna Sindair** (45%) for state rep. In Legislative District 18 (Longview to Aberdeen), all three labor-backed Democrats lost: incumbent state senator **Dean Takko** (45%), incumbent state rep **Brian Blake** (48%), and nurse union member **Marianna Everson** (41%).

In Legislative District 49 (Vancouver), all three union-endorsed incumbent Democrats won easily: state senator **Annette Cleveland** (59%), and state reps **Sharon Wylie** (65%) and **Monica Stonier** (64%).

For Clark County Council, union-endorsee **Jesse James** appeared to be narrowly winning a seat with 50.22%, but **Matt Little** lost with 44%.

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