



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

Working People Made the Difference

The last few months, and really the last four years, have been immeasurably difficult for working people in Oregon and across the country.

It is hard right now to remember a pre-COVID time. For the past eight months, workers have had their backs up against the wall, bearing the brunt of multiple crises at once, and been rightly focused on their health and economic security. Finding the bandwidth to more than survive 2020 hasn't been in the cards for many of us.

All of these challenges were only compounded by one of the most divisive, chaotic, and consequential presidential elections in our nation's history.

Throughout this challenging and dangerous year, I have continued to be inspired by the resilience, the determination, and the grit of the labor movement. Oregon's unions have been speaking out for greater protections on the job from COVID-19, fighting for "hero pay" as workers risk their lives showing up to work, constantly pushing for policy change

that will help working people during difficult times, and ensuring that workers are able to access vital safety net benefits when they lose their jobs.

And critically, working people stepped up to be the difference makers on November 3 from the White House to the State House. The historic election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, two strong champions for our movement, was a critical component in our efforts to curtail the constant attacks we've seen from the current occupant in the White House, fight COVID-19 in a comprehensive and scientifically-driven way, and unrig the rules of the economy by passing federal labor law reform and the PRO Act.

Electing Shemia Fagan as our next secretary of state ushers in one of Oregon's strongest pro-union elected champions to the second highest office, effectively Oregon's lieutenant governor. Electing an incredibly diverse slate of new legislators, including nearly 10 who are either current or former union

members, will help strengthen a pro-union culture within our Democratic caucuses.

To further showcase our movement's commitment to fighting for the safety of every worker, on November 16, Oregon became one of only a few states in the nation to implement clear, enforceable, and statewide workplace protections from COVID-19 through Oregon OSHA.

The critical election season or the challenges of facing a global pandemic and economic collapse did not stop Oregon's unions from fighting from day one of the pandemic to protect *all* workers through this critical workplace safety standard. Limiting exposure on the job is an essential component to beating the virus, and Oregonians now have several key and long overdue protections. You can learn more about this rule and stay up to date at <https://oraflcio.org/osha>.

We all know that there is so much more work to be done to protect workers from the surging virus, re-

cover from the recession, tackle systemic and institutional racism, and to build a just and fair economy.

However, we should also recognize and celebrate these critical electoral and policy wins, especially given the realities and the challenges of 2020. As these past eight months have highlighted, America's labor movement is often the last and only line of defense for anyone who works for a living. And when our movement is united by a common purpose, a vision of shared prosperity, and an unwavering commitment to tackling head on the most powerful forces of greed in our country, there is nothing that can stop us.

Workers should celebrate the progress we've made towards a better future for the next generation. Our nation and our state are better for all you have done and continue to do to make our movement such an inspiring force for change.

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

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From Page 1

minating its contract with the State of Oregon to help about 300 developmentally disabled clients, ostensibly for budgetary savings. The 11 workers in MCCFL's Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services department would be laid off as of Sept. 30. It was a unit that made money for the organization, and Gower didn't discuss it with her board before making the decision. Oregon AFSCME representative Dennis Ziemer thinks management believed erroneously that the department was the center of union activity.

The State of Oregon shifted the contract to Tigard-headquartered non-profit Community Living Case Management, which hired all of the bargaining unit members working in that unit effective October 1, 2020, and recognized the union as

their bargaining representative.

Oregon AFSCME filed an unfair labor practice charge Aug. 18, which led to a two-day hearing Oct. 21-22 before an administrative law judge. Another two-day hearing was scheduled for November, but MCCFL decided to settle the charges rather than incur more legal expense.

Under the terms of the settlement, besides the penalty and attorney fees, MCCFL will also restore the status quo by rescinding the new employee manual, giving benefits and full-time status to the new hires, and bargaining with the union over the impact of the layoffs.

Ziemer thinks management's anti-union posture only solidified union support among the workers.

Bargaining over a first union contract has been under way since Sept. 17.