

# NEWS

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

## MILLIONS OF WOMEN MARCHED, NOW WHAT?

WOMEN'S MARCHERS IN PINK PUSSYHATS RALLY IN WASHINGTON DC THE DAY AFTER TRUMP'S INAUGURATION

PHOTO: AUDREY BLACK

**O**n Jan. 21, a sea of pink pussyhats and vibrant signs promoting women's rights and denouncing President Donald Trump swelled across the nation. Cries of "We need a leader! Not a creepy tweeter!" and "This is what Democracy looks like" echoed in the streets as the Women's March surged beyond expectations.

In Eugene, estimates from the police and marchers ranged from 7,000 to 10,000 participants. Nationwide, researchers from the universities of Connecticut and Denver, who are collecting data on the marchers, lowballed the numbers at about 3.2 million with a possible high of 4.7 million.

That's a lot of pussyhats. So what do you do with all that energy? What are the next steps?

Rep. Peter DeFazio, who was at the Eugene sister march, calls the Women's March "the largest peaceful political demonstration in history." He tells *EW*: "This campaign season was incredibly divisive, but a positive outcome that I noticed immediately is an increased level of engagement." He says that hundreds of people told him, "I haven't ever really been involved before, but now I will be."

Newly elected Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis spoke at the Eugene march. She says that nationally and statewide, despite being a blue state with an active Democratic Party, "we still have work to do in terms of who we are reaching," and points to the upcoming midterm elections.

Oregon's two senators are Democrats, and in the House only one of Oregon's five representatives, Greg Walden, is a Republican. The national Women's March in its "10 Actions for the Next 100 Days" suggests starting off by sending postcards to your senators "about what matters most to you."

Another resource being shared among marchers on social media is Swing Left, a website launched in the wake of the 2016 election that encourages progressives to find their closest swing districts and join their teams "to learn about actionable opportunities to support progressives — and defeat Republicans — in that district, no matter where you live." (According to the site, the closest swing district to *EW*'s 97401 zip code is California's 7th Congressional District, near Sacramento.)

Vinis, as a new mayor, also encourages working at the very local level. She points out that populations across the nation are concentrated in cities, and cities "really turn the direction of our nation."

A local example of a movement creating change at the city level is Emily Semple of Occupy Eugene, who was elected to the Ward 1 Eugene City Council seat in November.

Vinis also calls for community members to step up and join one of an array of city commissions. According to a recent press release from the city, seven commissions are looking for members, from the police Civilian Review Board to the Human Rights Commission and the Toxics Board.

Vinis says, "We need a diversity of opinions, people of color, more women." She says ideally a broad spectrum of applicants would also include better geographic representation across the city.

She says that human rights, the environment, economic justice and women's reproductive rights are all things "we work on here in Eugene," so she encourages people to also look to nonprofits that address their concerns.

DeFazio echoes that sentiment, advising, "Do some research and identify a group that is aligned with your values — add your support to their efforts." He adds, "Dedicated volunteers are the most valuable resource for a community organization or political campaign. A powerful and organized volunteer force is the most effective way to target issues and implement change."

Community activist Misa Joo, who is a third generation

Japanese-American and a tribal member of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe of Northern California and was part of the Eugene Women's March, writes in a call to action on Facebook: "Next Black Lives Matter rally, 15,000 of us show up."

Joo cites both local and national issues, from tribal concerns at Standing Rock over water protection at the Dakota Access Pipeline to Warm Springs and local efforts to stop mining at TV Butte in Oakridge.

Citing the large numbers that turned out at the marches, Joo says that those numbers can be turned not just to marches but to passing bonds and tax levies that keep "human support going for people who need it in these hard times" when Trump "thinks only about cutting taxes for his cronies and has derision for the People."

Joo calls in her post to "prove our democracy with our feet, our hands, our heart and our voices. Move this government, bulky, weighed down and rigged as it is, with the unity of our aspirations until it's real." ■

For "10 Actions for the First 100 Days" go to [womensmarch.com/100](http://womensmarch.com/100). For a roundup of local nonprofits to give your time, energy and money to, check out *EW*'s Give Guide at [bit.ly/2koVe1S](http://bit.ly/2koVe1S) and go to [swingleft.org](http://swingleft.org) to find a swing district near you to help change the midterm elections.

