

A Bold Stand for Accountability



SEIU members take action to hold elected officials accountable.

by Leslie Frane, Executive Director, SEIU Local 503, OPEU

SEIU Local 503, OPEU members weighed in heavily in the May primary election for governor, and our impact was felt statewide. Members phone banked, distributed literature, organized rallies, contributed money, and voted in large numbers. Political experts have credited our members' work with increasing Jim Hill's total of the vote by more than fifteen percentage points between the early polling and the ultimate results when ballots were counted on May 16.

Members like Jim Hill and go for accountability

Our decision to endorse Hill dates back to March, when we invited all of the major candidates for governor to a forum attended by over 200 SEIU members. By the end of the forum, it was clear that momentum for a Hill endorsement was growing. Next, our CAPE committee - elected members from throughout the state who serve as our political action committee board - recommended we endorse Hill. Finally, the elected members on our Board of Directors and the Oregon State Council made the endorsement official.

When members spoke about why we should endorse Hill, two themes emerged. "We were incredibly impressed with Jim. He would be an excellent governor. But we also wanted to send a message about accountability. Kulongoski didn't stand by us during his first term, and we wanted to let all elected officials in this state know that we take accountability seriously," said Jennifer Hufman, a CAPE committee member who works in the Purchasing Department of the University of Oregon Library.

We face a tough decision in the general election

Now that the primary is behind us, SEIU members face a tough decision in the general election. Barbara Casey, a bargaining delegate who works at DHS to find safe

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homes for children in substitute care, explains, "Some people feel we shouldn't endorse anyone for Governor because none of the candidates has earned our support. I'm fearful about Saxton saying he will privatize entire state agencies and about his desire to eliminate PERS completely. Bargaining our next DAS, OUS, and home care contracts will be hard no matter what. But it'll be brutal if Saxton is calling the shots for management."

Members will have a number of opportunities to weigh in on this issue. Homecare and nursing home workers discussed the endorsement options at a forum on July 9. There will be open discussion of our options at the July 22 DAS/OUS bargaining conference (see pg 4). Members from other sectors (e.g. local government and private non-profit agency employees) are welcome at the July 22 event. Then, members on CAPE and the Board of Directors will consider all of the input and it will be time to decide.

“ We wanted to let all elected officials in this state know that we take accountability seriously. ”

Jennifer Hufman
Library Purchasing Assistant, University of Oregon

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Members At Marion County Stand Together



Members get involved in their contract fight in a big way, filling the room to overflowing at a Marion County bargaining session.

Members at Marion County reached a tentative agreement on June 21. "More members got involved than in previous contract negotiations," says Mary Reese who works on the crisis team for people with developmental disabilities. "Our two biggest turnouts were when we filled a bargaining session to overflowing and when we delivered hundreds of balloons with individual messages from members to commissioners. Involvement from the CAT

team was amazing. We held barbecues with all departments, held rallies, and purpled up the County on Tuesdays." Members won on health care with a choice of a fully-paid Kaiser Plus plan or an old-style indemnity plan with some out-of-pocket premium share. Members won 2% this year and 2-3% next year (depending on some funding issues) and made gains on important issues around overtime, probation upon reclass, and sick leave.