

Promising Political Season Also Poses Serious Threats

Building on momentum from a series of heartening victories in the May primary, SEIU 503 members are gearing up for a fall political campaign that offers great promise — but also presents ominous challenges in the form of a series of ballot measures designed to cripple the ability of union members to participate in the political process and siphon huge sums of money from the state treasury.

"From a political standpoint I can't think of a more important moment in the recent history of our union," said Bart Lewis, CAPE Treasurer and retiree from the University of Oregon. "We have compelling messages on behalf of working families and outstanding candidates who stand behind them, starting with Barack Obama.

"Yet once again we must divert time, energy and resources from issues that matter to working families such as health care, corporate accountability, energy prices and tax fairness to defend our very right to engage in the political arena. That's because mischief-makers like Bill Sizemore, Kevin Mannix and the wealthy right-wingers who finance their anti-union agenda are at it again. That makes it more essential than ever that we educate the electorate and get out the vote."

First the good news:

Oregonians have the opportunity to do more than elect the right president. We can help change the Senate so that President Obama's agenda of expanding health care and enacting the Employee Free Choice Act in the first 100 days becomes law. As House Speaker in Salem, Jeff Merkley stood with SEIU 503 time and again on such crucial issues as the right for childcare and adult foster care workers to organize, card check for Oregon workers and the payday lending cap. Come January he could be the 60th vote against filibusters, breaking the stranglehold Senators like Gordon Smith have held on progressive legislation.

Work by SEIU members across the state contributed to primary victories for Merkley for U. S. Senate, John Kroger for Attorney General, Kate Brown for Secretary of State and Ben Westlund for Treasurer as well as State Legislative candidates Chris Garrett (House District 38), Michael Dembrow (H.D. 45) and Nick Kahl (H.D. 49) and mayoral victors Sam Adams in Portland and Denny Doyle in Beaverton.

Members donated time and resources; talked to friends, coworkers and neighbors; conducted phone banks in Portland, Salem, Corvallis, Eugene, Roseburg, Tillamook, Coos Bay, Grants Pass, Medford, Bend, Hood, Lincoln City, Albany, Burns, John Day, Klamath Falls, Newport, Hermiston, Ontario, Baker City and Pendleton; and knocked on doors across the state.



SEIU 503 members phonebank for Obama and other candidates during May primary.

Cumulatively, SEIU Local 503 members and staff made 160,000 phone calls, knocked on 31,250 doors, worked more than 1400 volunteer shifts, and sent over 300,000 pieces of mail to primary voters. United with more than 30,000 workers in Change to Win and other unions to get out the vote, we helped Obama amass a statewide plurality of over 100,000 votes.

As The Oregonian's Jeff Mapes put it in his blog on primary night, "This is a union you want on your side."

But as they have in the past, those on the other side are sparing no cost to try to counter the gains of SEIU 503, other unions and progressive organizations and the working families we represent.

It started early with a series of television ads in the weeks before the primary portraying ugly stereotypes of union members and declaring — falsely — that the Employee Free Choice Act would limit the rights of workers. This drumbeat picked up two days after the primary in full-page ads across the state vilifying Merkley for his support of the act, which has been

Continued on page 2

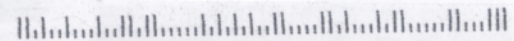
July 2008

The 503 VOICE

Nonprofit Org
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 202
Salem, Oregon

203-73581-M-2
SCOTT FLETCHER
961 MINDSA ST S
SALEM OR 97302

9730255637 C021



See Statewide Officer Candidates — Pages 2-3



Unit members and supporters from SEIU and the community set up an informational picket line last month outside Portland HQ of Morrison Child and Family Services, which runs the Rosemont School. Days later, 60 workers had their first contract.

Rosemont Workers Exult Over Gains in 1st Contract

SEIU 503 members at the Rosemont Treatment Center and School in Southeast Portland have negotiated a groundbreaking contract with Morrison Child and Family Services, including six months of collective bargaining.

After a near-unanimous ratification in late June, about 60 workers at the facility for troubled girls gained an immediate average wage increase of 3.63% and improved sick leave, holiday leave and bereavement leave as well as key improvements on health and safety issues affecting them and the girls in their charge and a range of new workplace rights.

"I don't have the words to describe how this day has changed my life," said one exultant member of the bargaining team, Saige Gracie. "So many hours of effort, heartbreak, fury and sweat. My heart is on fire.

"We have real rights and real equality. All of my deep breaths from this point on belong to the people who held my hand through this process."

The contract establishes staffing levels that will improve the therapeutic care of clients, specifically requiring at least three staff members to be scheduled for each dorm at all times absent a written explanation, and gives staffers the right to summon police if they encounter a situation that would likely lead to assault or injury.

Other health and safety provisions will alert residential skills specialists to the presence of infectious disease, provide accommodation for pregnant staff members, allow extra breaks after escalated incidents when coverage is available, and give workers input on a committee to discuss better and nutritious food options and sanitation.

The contract also spells out job protections including a grievance procedure; just-cause language and a

"progressive" system of discipline; access to personnel files with a right to respond and remove negative comments after a year; and a set of rights to union participation and representation.

In addition to a wage scale that includes a Step System (which comes on top of an increase Morrison instituted last year during the organizing campaign), workers won the right to use sick leave for illness, injury, mental health, medical appointments for immediate family members (including domestic partners), seven paid holidays with 1.8 times regular pay for those required to work, and three days of paid bereavement leave for designated family members.

The contract guarantees at least two hours of pay if employees are called in, creates a fair process for filling in for those out sick, affords senior workers bumping rights in the event of a layoff, establishes seniority and availability as decisive factors for filling vacancies within classification, and allows employees up to a year of personal leave as well as the right to take leaves for medical issues, military service, or union work.

Rosemont employees and their community supporters pressed hard for a compensation and benefit package that would alleviate chronic staff turnover at the facility, the largest secure residential treatment center for troubled teen girls in the Pacific Northwest.

"The best part of this contract is that it will give us the ability to consistently give the girls what they need," said another bargainer, Charlie Ashton. "Higher staffing ratios will be enforced, so staff won't have to worry about work when we're not at work. We've made a huge step towards a living wage, and we are still united after over a year of working towards this contract."