

First-Term Legislators We Helped to Elect Are Emerging as Strong Labor Allies

SEIU members helped elect 10 new pro-labor legislators to the Oregon House of Representatives in 2008. These legislators proved to be champions on workers' rights and quality public services.

Representatives Michael Dembrow and Greg Matthews stood out as especially strong leaders in the area of workers' rights, earning A+ grades from SEIU for leading efforts to protect the rights of workers in general and SEIU members specifically. Jules Bailey, Nick Kahl and Suzanne Van Orman also earned an A+ for their leadership in the fight for quality public services and the workers who deliver those services.



Michael Dembrow

Bailey, Dembrow, Chris Garrett, Chris Harker, Kahl, Matthews, Jefferson Smith, and Judy Stiegler all earned straight A voting ratings. All SEIU-endorsed freshman legislators voted to increase revenue and preserve vital public services. This was particularly difficult for freshmen legislators Brent Barton, Suzanne Van Orman, and Judy Stiegler, whose districts have been in the hands of anti-public service politicians for years and who could face very difficult re-election campaigns.



Greg Matthews

This session two union members, Greg Matthews and Michael Dembrow joined the ranks of the legislature, bringing the total number of union members in the 2009 legislature to six. Other union members in the Legislature included Representatives Brad Witt, Paul Holvey and Larry Galizio (who left the House after the session to join the Oregon University System) and Senator Diane Rosenbaum. Dembrow and Matthews were strong advocates for workers' rights and during their first session. Rosenbaum championed paid family leave and SB 519, which protects workers from involuntary anti-union meetings.

Want to Run...?

Having union members in the Legislature has dramatically improved the attitudes of their fellow legislators toward workers' issues. What is still lacking in the Legislature is an SEIU member who understands the unique issues facing state workers and publicly funded care providers. If you are interested in filling that void, please let your organizer know!