

Some Political Calls Can Be Close: How Would YOU Vote on These?

The mission of the union's political program is to win for workers, quality services, and economic fairness while navigating partisan political terrain.

Through CAPE — Citizen Action for Political Education — we work hard and well to elect pro-worker legislative leaders willing to put themselves on the line for fair and progressive results.

House Speaker Dave Hunt and Senate President Peter Courtney did a stellar job fighting for working families in 2009. Their colleagues, Majority Leaders Richard Devlin in the Senate and Mary Nolan in the House, also provided strong leadership on public policy fights that affected our members.

On the flip side, Minority Leaders Senator Ted Ferrioli and Representative Bruce Hanna fought tooth-and-nail against workers' rights, contract fairness, economic justice, affordable and accessible health care, and a budget that preserves quality services. Their attacks were systematic, often seeking to vilify front-line workers. It has not always been so, but in today's environment the pro-worker leaders are all Democrats and the anti-worker leaders are all Republicans, and endorsement decisions with these six were obvious.

But what about Republicans and Democrats who are not in leadership positions? A number of legislators who — as you will read in this SEIU Legislative Accountability Report — vote for working families every step of the way. They share our values and believe workers need a voice on the job. They want big corporations and the wealthy to help pay for quality services for those who are falling behind in the economic downturn. They fight for affordable and accessible health care for all Oregonians. The vast majority of this group, it turns out, are also Democrats. Endorsement decisions involving these men and women likewise tend to be straightforward.

But how should the rank-and-file leaders of our union who make endorsement decisions view legislators who choose to buck their party leadership on key issues? Voting against party leaders is a huge deal in the Capitol. Being a team player there is valued as highly as solidarity is in the union. **Does it take political courage to risk your future and stand up for principles and defy party leadership and political supporters? Or are those votes more about political calculus and snubbing allies, when it pays to side with interests that might help you in the short term?**