

Small party wants bigger say on 'pocketbook issues'

1. Adjective
2. Noun
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10. Adjective
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12. Adjective
13. Noun
14. Verb - Past Tense
15. Noun - Plural
16. To
17. Verb - Present Ends In S
18. Number
19. Number
20. Job
21. Organization
22. Location

23. Name
24. Organization
25. Issue
26. Name
27. City Government Office
28. Issue
29. Year
30. Issue
31. Color
32. Color
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35. Color
36. Color
37. Name
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With the primaries ended this week, a small, little-known political party that focuses on workers' issues is launching a _____ Adjective _____ Noun _____ Noun in anticipation of the November election.

The aim of the Oregon Working Families Party is to influence state policy by _____ Adjective rural and urban voters around _____ Noun table economic issues that matter to working people. The party, which takes no position on _____ Adjective issues such as _____ Adjective _____ Noun or _____ Noun, promotes itself as "the _____ Adjective _____ Noun, pocketbook issues party," says Jeff Anderson, a member of the party's steering committee.

A powerful tool it will use to push its agenda is an electoral strategy called fusion voting, a version of which became legal again in Oregon in 2009. It allows political parties to _____ Adjective candidates on the ballot -- that is, to give their _____ Noun to candidates from other parties.

"It allows us to endorse candidates and then hold them _____ Verb - Past Tense," said Barbara Dudley, party co-chair, "without running our own candidates who could function as _____ Noun - Plural."

Party representatives will soon start _____ to major party candidates to _____ Verb - Present ends in S where they stand on Working Families Party issues.

The

party has about _____^{Number}_____,000 members, mainly in the Portland area and many of whom are union affiliated. Dudley hopes to have _____^{Number}_____,000 registered members by August.

So who is joining the party and why? Bruce Cronk, 68, is a retired _____^{Job}_____ and member of the _____^{Organization}_____ Steel Workers Union who lives in suburban _____^{Location}_____. He joined the OWFP after the 2008 general election because he felt that Republicans and Democrats were beholden to big business and Wall Street.

"Sen. Ron Wyden," he said, is "unabashed about his support of free trade. That doesn't make any points with me. The Democrats need a third party to push them to deal with workers' issues."

_____^{Name}_____ Carter, 24, works for the _____^{Organization}_____ Authority of Portland. She attended an OWFP happy hour presentation about fusion voting.

"It really caught my interest," she said. "It allows third parties to play a much greater role. I decided that it was a party I wanted to give my full support to. Being a single mom, I love that they are pushing for _____^{Issue}_____ disability insurance for all Oregonians."

Another Portlander, _____^{Name}_____ Haines, 49, works part time for the city's _____^{City Government Office}_____ of Planning

and Sustainability and part time in a restaurant. She describes herself as very progressive and says she is passionate about the right of workers to organize. She also likes the party's campaign to _____ Issue a state-owned bank, similar to the one that has existed in North Dakota since 1919.

"I like the idea of keeping investments local," she said.

The idea is that state agencies would deposit their funds in the bank, which would then use them for loans to local farmers, students and small businesses and to promote the local economy in other ways. The party is asking major party candidates seeking endorsements to support the creation of a state bank.

Also on the platform for _____ Year: _____ Issue higher education and a call to "tie _____ Color strings to _____ Color jobs." In other words, to make sure that _____ Color jobs that garner tax breaks for corporations are worker-friendly. Some _____ Color jobs -- recycling or solar energy installation, for example -- can pay low wages with no benefits.

"I really like that it doesn't have to be about _____ Color or _____ Color," Haines said, "to be able to take an issues-based stand, and judge a candidate on those, is really effective."

_____ Name Rodgers, 39, a _____ Job from Sweet Home, makes a similar point. He was a registered

_____ Political Party

before switching to OWFP, which, he said, "does a good job of isolating _____ Adjective issues and concentrating on issues that really _____ Adjective to working people.

"The workers of this country," he said, "need a third party that looks out for them."

--Rebecca Koffman, Special to The Oregonian