Incumbents’ evaluations now include sponsorship, advocacy

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After the 2009 session, when labor’s agenda was not only ignored but also attacked by the Democratic majority in the legislature, the Washington State Labor Council’s affiliated unions instituted a complete review of the organization’s political program.

One of the key changes adopted was to establish a more comprehensive system of evaluating the performance of incumbent state legislators, given that voting records don’t always explain who is truly advocating for working families or opposing their interests. This is necessary because it has become common practice for caucus leaders to “protect” their members by either denying votes on important working family legislation or by blocking recorded roll-call votes on the floor.

That’s why, beginning this year, the Washington State Labor Council’s Legislative Voting Records will also include candidate scores for bill sponsorship, caucus floor advocacy, and community support for labor’s activities. These additional scores, along with the local-level questionnaire, interview and recommendation process conducted by the Central Labor Councils, will all be considered by delegates considering WSLC election endorsements at our C.O.P.E. (Committee on Political Education) Convention on May 15 and any additional endorsements that may occur at the WSLC Constitutional Convention on Aug. 9-12 in Tacoma.

The candidates’ Total Point Scores will be apportioned based on the following formula:

**2010 VOTING RECORD (15%)** — This year’s voting record on selected bills and amendments supported or opposed by the WSLC.

**2009 VOTING RECORD (15%)** — Last year’s voting record on selected bills and amendments supported or opposed by the WSLC.

**LIFETIME VOTING RECORD (30%)** — The WSLC Voting Record for the incumbent’s entire career in the State Legislature.

**SPONSORSHIP (5%)** — Legislators are awarded up to 5 points for sponsoring or co-sponsoring pro-worker legislation. They can also receive negative points for sponsoring anti-worker bills. Although they can’t sponsor bills, the House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader both receive 5 points because they are instrumental in moving legislation.

**ADVOCACY (10%)** — Up to 10 points for actively advocating for labor-supported legislation in caucus among other legislators and in floor speeches, and for accessibility to labor.

The following two criteria are not included in this publication because regional Central Labor Councils continue their evaluations at press time:

- COMMUNITY (5%) — Up to 5 points for publicly advocating for pro-worker issues and participating in labor events in their districts.
- C.L.C. PROCESS (20%) — Incumbents will be evaluated based on the responses to questionnaires and candidate interviews conducted by Central Labor Councils.

The changes don’t stop there. The WSLC has also developed a system to more strategically target campaign contributions and grassroots political efforts.

In the past, the WSLC and many of its affiliates have made significant contributions to caucus campaign committees and to incumbent legislators who were not facing serious election challenges. Those contributions are often used by caucus leadership to fund activities that benefit individual legislators who work against the interests of our members.

To make sure that only those legislators who stand up for working families receive our financial support, the WSLC created the “Don’t Invest In More Exeuses” Political Action Committee (DIME PAC) for unions to target campaign contributions more strategically.

It’s up to the rank-and-file members and elected officers of every union to decide how to make their political contributions. Many have chosen to contribute to DIME PAC rather than to political party funds.

That said, the value of labor’s endorsement has never been about money. Unions can’t compete with the cash that corporate interests pump into campaigns at the state and federal levels. Labor’s strength has always been in its members, who are widely seen as the “foot soldiers” for many political campaigns. That’s because of our long, proud history of effective political volunteerism and activism, not because of our campaign contributions. Like the monetary support from DIME PAC, the grassroots election activities of our successful Labor Neighbor program will be targeted to elect champions for working families, not just to build political majorities.

In addition, there is renewed interest among some affiliated unions to more aggressively pursue ballot initiatives that take workers’ issues directly to voters—as labor did in leading the charge for our historic indexed minimum wage. Look for news on this front soon.

All of these changes are part of a long-term strategy to ensure that labor’s political efforts are more effectively targeted to advancing pro-worker agenda in Washington state. The true champions of that agenda are the legislators who deserve our support. That support must not be taken for granted or manipulated by party organizations and their leaders.

**WHAT HASN’T CHANGED: OUR DELEGATES DECIDE**

By Constitution, delegates representing the affiliated unions of the Washington State Labor Council will vote on which candidates and ballot measures to endorse. A two-thirds majority is required for endorsement. All delegates will be given a comprehensive Total Point Score for each incumbent legislator, which includes all of the information in this publication plus the CLC Process (worth 20%), which was not yet available at press time.

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**2010 Legislative Voting Record of the Washington State Labor Council**

**KEY**

(Democrats are listed in bold.)

- “Right” vote
- “Wrong” vote

See the Senate Vote Descriptions on Page 5.

**SPON.** is the score (up to 5 pts.) for bill sponsorships.

**ADV.** is the score (up to 10 pts.) for caucus floor advocacy for or against labor legislation.
1. **SHB 1329**—Childcare workers collective bargaining rights. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 62-35, Jan. 27)

2. **EHB 2444**—Supports families and education by providing leave from employment for participating in a child’s educational activities. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 54-40, Feb. 13)

3. **ESHB 2986**—Gives transit workers a voice by adding labor members to public transportation governing bodies. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 66-29, Feb. 13)

4. **E2SHB 3024 (Chandler striker)**—Protect worker and patient safety by providing nurses and critical health care workers with uninterrupted meal and rest breaks. Rep. Chandler’s amendment was to let employers bargain lower standards. “Right” vote: NO. (Failed 41-56, Feb. 15)

5. **ESSB 6503**—Cutting $70 million from state agency budgets through state employee furloughs and other steps. “Right” vote: NO. (Passed 27-17, Jan. 22)

6. **ESSB 6130**—Repealing I-960, allowing legislators to close tax loopholes and approve revenue with a majority vote. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 26-22, Feb. 9)

7. **SSB 5046**—Musicians’ collective bargaining; places symphony musicians under PERC jurisdiction. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 30-17, Feb. 11)

8. **ESSB 6726**—Language access providers collective bargaining rights. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 29-19, Feb. 15)


10. **ESSB 6143**—State revenue package, raising about $757 million to avoid some of the devastating cuts to state services. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 25-21, April 12)

11. **ESSB 6444 (Williams amendment)**—Rep. Williams amendment would have removed budget language requiring privatization of some liquor stores. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 52-44, Apr. 10)

12. **ESLB 6044 (Williams amendment)**—Rep. Williams amendment would have removed budget language requiring privatization of some liquor stores. “Right” vote: YES. (Passed 57-40, Apr. 11)