
UNION ELECTIONEERING IN 2014

And the results

The election results are very encouraging, and they signal a tide change with regard to the electioneering power of government unions.

From the U.S. Congress to the Washington State Legislature, union-backed candidates and their message were consistently repudiated by voters. The following are some of the more noteworthy examples.

Governorships:

Several conservative reformers in particular were targeted by Big Labor, including Wisconsin's Scott Walker, Michigan's Rick Snyder, Florida's Rick Scott, and Ohio's John Kasich.

The AFL-CIO [announced plans](#) earlier this year to spend \$300 million seeking to oust these GOP incumbents. All advocated over major labor reforms and won re-election.

In a further blow to the interests of entrenched government unions, Republican Bruce Rauner - who has been [described](#) by some labor sympathizers as "horribly and historically anti-union" - [unseated](#) Democrat incumbent and union ally Pat Quinn in blue state Illinois. A "[scheme](#)" implemented by Quinn and the SEIU to force Medicaid-subsidized home care workers to pay union dues was recently struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Harris v. Quinn* decision.

Also of interest is Pennsylvania's Tom Corbett who drew union fire by [expressing a willingness](#) to sign pension reforms and paycheck protection legislation, even though he did [very little](#) to actually help such reforms become law. Governor Corbett was defeated.

Washington State Legislature:

Senate:

Local labor unions pulled out all the stops in an attempt to prevent conservatives from maintaining their governing coalition in the state Senate. Rough, preliminary estimates of how funds siphoned from workers were brought into this election include:

Bellevue area Republican, Andy Hill, was opposed with more than \$107,000 from unions.

Tacoma area Republican, Steve O'Ban, who successfully argued before the [US Supreme Court](#) against union officials, was targeted for defeat by union officials with at least \$240,000.

Bellingham area Republican, Doug Ericksen, had at least \$90,000 from unions spent to keep him from returning to office.

Federal Way area new Republican Mark Miloscia sought an open seat, and was opposed by at least \$132,000 in union funds.

Shelton area Democrat Tim Sheldon, who is not liberal enough for Democrat leaders, had at least \$223,000 from unions spent to unseat him.

As the election dust settles, though, the "[right-wingers who control the State Senate](#)" have not only held their ground, but [expanded their majority](#) to 25 Republicans plus Sheldon to 23 other Democrats.

In addition to the expenditures union officials made in these kinds of races, union officials also directly transferred more than \$550,000 from their members' workplace dues to the Democrats Kennedy Fund and other PACs dedicated to Democrats' election efforts in these and other races.

House:

Additionally, liberals' grip on the state house [has been weakened](#), with several tight races still to be decided. Key battlegrounds include:

Vancouver area incumbent Democrat Stonier is losing despite more than \$350,000 in union officials' expenditures to protect her seat.

A Snohomish area open seat was not captured by the Democrats and the unions even though union officials spent at least \$225,000.

Gig Harbor area Democrat challenger, Nathan Schlicher, was unable to defeat the Republican incumbent even though he benefitted from at least \$175,000 in union expenditures.

Puyallup area incumbent Dawn Morell is losing despite nearly \$50,000 from unions and \$80,000 from the Truman Fund which is nearly half funded by union dues.

Shelton area incumbent Kathy Haigh is on the razor's edge of defeat despite \$26,000 in union funds and \$110,000 in support from the Truman Fund.

Gig Harbor area incumbent Democrat Larry Seaquist is losing despite more than \$44,000 diverted from workplace representation to help buy his election.

A Tacoma area Democrat open seat is too close to call despite \$29,000 from union dues plus another \$136,000 worth of independent expenditures funded by union officials.

The Truman Fund which financed campaign activities in these and other races received nearly \$750,000 from unions.

Washington's Initiative 1351:

Billed as a "class-size reduction" initiative, I-1351 was backed exclusively by government unions, particularly the Washington Education Association (WEA) and its national affiliate. The unions [poured more than \\$4.8 million](#) into supporting the initiative, which would require the state to hire thousands of new union dues-paying teachers and support staff, even though class-size reductions beyond early grades [do little to improve student achievement](#).

Despite the WEA/NEA's sizeable investment, the amount of new dues generated from additional staff would pay for the entire costs of bankrolling the initiative [in a matter of months](#).

Though no organized campaign was mounted to oppose I-1351, the Freedom Foundation, newspaper editorial boards and bipartisan political observers from around the state spoke out against it. With union expenditures of \$4 per vote, the initiative is [passing narrowly](#), despite having [polled at more than 60 percent](#) in the weeks leading up to the election.

Seattle's Proposition 1A:

In an election fight that pit city officials against SEIU Local 925 and the American Federation of Teachers, Seattle voters [overwhelmingly approved](#) a city-backed pre-K initiative (Prop 1B) and rejected a competing pre-K measure [supported by the unions](#) (Prop 1A).

The union-funded "Yes for Early Success" PAC handily outspent proponents of the city's plan, with SEIU and AFT [contributing](#) more than \$1.1 million to support Prop 1A. While the city's plan included no special benefits for labor, Prop 1A would have, among other things, [expanded](#) union-controlled training, required childcare workers to be paid \$15 per hour and required the city to contract with SEIU 925 to facilitate communication with childcare workers.

The lesson:

The lesson for lawmakers at both the national and local levels should be clear. The victory of conservative governors who championed labor reform proves government unions can be successfully challenged, if done with resolve and conviction.

As the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial board [noted](#), the lesson both Republicans and Democrats should take away from the 2014 midterms is that "public-union money can be defeated when the cause is just and you stand your ground."