NAME: Laurie Trieger

CANDIDACY: Lane County Board of Commissioners

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HIGHER ED

Please describe your views and position on funding or support for higher education, including but not limited to, State funding, tuition rates, University accountability, etc.

The University of Oregon receives $70 million per year from the State Legislature as well as millions in private funds to the University Foundation, yet always seems to come up short. Ensuring that the University is adequately and properly funded will help reign in tuition increases, allow for program expansion instead of cuts, and help with staff retention. As a County Commissioner and a community leader, I would advocate for an increased level of transparency with the University’s budget process overall and with money received from private donors in particular. I was glad to see the Legislature pass the Student Success Act in the 2018/2019 session and would be a strong supporter of a similar bill to shore up quality and access to higher education. No one should be priced out of an education. We must also ensure staff-- at every level and across departments-- are being treated well; with good benefits, fair wages, and job security. Having productive, professional, respected university staff is a critical component of students’ educational experience.

Please describe your views and position on state transparency, especially in relation to University foundations that (are meant to) serve the interests of the State and its people.

University Foundations are meant to benefit our state and university students. Too often large contributions are made to the foundation with very little transparency or accountability as to what the money is being used for. Too often the University claims to not have enough money and responds by making big cuts to high performing programs that represent a tiny fraction of the institution’s overall budget. Cuts to the Labor Education Research Center (LERC) is a particularly glaring example of this. Publicly celebrated for its quality research, advocacy for workers, and public policy analysis, LERC is threatened with devastating cuts that would undermine its ability to continue to deliver these very services, trainings, and reports for which University representatives offer high praise. Additionally, there have been several issues over the years involving threatened and actual layoffs of classified staff; as well as policies that amount to pay cuts through inadequate benefits or COLAs. In 2014 and 2015, as the manager of the successful city-wide paid sick time campaign, and a key organizer in the passage of the
statewide sick time policy, I stood with the GTFF and others in support of University employees having access to this same basic worker right. As a County Commissioner, I would advocate for increased transparency specifically when the University receives large amounts of money, with a clear and easy reporting system that also identifies where money comes from and how it is being spent. Additionally, whenever possible, I would advocate moving funds into investments in staff, the first line of service providers in the University.

UNION RIGHTS

Do you support the right of employees to collectively bargain?
Yes. I have and will always support workers right to collectively bargain.

Would you oppose efforts to eliminate or restrict the right of workers and their unions to represent all workers or use payroll-deduction for union dues, including publicly opposing ballot measures?
Yes. The right to have a seat at the table and collectively bargain is a fundamental right that must be protected. Policy like the PERS bill in the most recent legislative session is unacceptable. We cannot balance budgets on the backs of workers. Before my career in the nonprofit sector, I spent many years waiting tables, working in retail, and cleaning office buildings at night when my children were young. I know how hard it can be to make ends meet while trying to raise a family. I am committed to protecting workers and their rights to bargain for health insurance, humane paid leave policies, fair wages, pay equity, and the benefits and protections that they deserve.

How likely are you to publicly oppose measures, as indicated above, that are deemed to be hostile to organized labor?
I am committed to publicly opposing and working against measures deemed hostile against organized labor. I am proud to have been a leader of the coalition that helped pass several protective bills for workers; including paid sick leave, retirement security, pay equity, protection and recourse from wage theft, as well as the Ban the Box Campaign and anti-profiling laws. I have committed much of my career working in coalition to protect workers and their right to organize and will continue to do so as a county commissioner.

What are some of the ways you imagine pushing back on the continued effort to weaken Union strength (State legislation following Janus v. AFSCME; attempt to gut LERC; etc.,)?
The Janus decision, as well as the attempt to gut LERC, was extremely disappointing to me. LERC specifically is a very important program both for its pro-labor trainings and research expertise. I spent a morning on the picket line with AFSCME workers from Lane County when they struck in 2017. The University of Oregon and Lane County government are two of the top ten largest employers in the county and I believe both entities have an opportunity and a responsibility to be model employers to yield a stable, well-supported workforce. We have to look to the workforce and workplace of the future; this includes things like offering flexible scheduling, telecommuting options, alternative transit incentives, child care supports and more. As a County Commissioner my door will be open to union members, department heads, leaders and organizers so that we can learn from one another in service to strengthening unions.
LOCAL ISSUES

What is your position (and any plans) on addressing the Eugene/Springfield housing situation?

I recognize and feel the urgency in Lane County’s housing crisis. We are not building the quality, affordable housing for those already here wishing to stay, or for newcomers to our community. As a consequence many local businesses struggle to find and keep skilled workers, which decreases potential for economic growth and development. We must streamline permitting processes and continue to work across sectors to solve barriers such as limits to buildable land and zoning restrictions. Before we expand outward, we must make the most of the land within our existing urban growth boundary; building up instead of out. With half of Eugene’s housed people being renters, fostering strong and positive working relationships between tenants and landlords is another critical area for improvement to stabilize housing in our community. Lastly, when planning and building new neighborhoods, we must ensure that they are safe, walk- and bike-able, and have easy access to essential services including health care facilities, grocery stores, parks, schools, and public transit.

Our area has seen an uptick in “hate crimes” and related activities. How would you work towards addressing these issues?

It is critical for elected officials, as leaders, to stand up against hate in our community. Eugene and its surroundings have a serious problem with hate related crimes as well as with organized hate groups fomenting bigotry, xenophobia, sexism, and racism. We must ensure public safety officers are properly trained to handle and investigate these situations, to ensure they are not part of the problem but part of the solution. This means prioritizing de-escalation, among other training needs. We need to partner with schools and implement programs to meet these challenges head on, with young people, as they find their way in the world and establish peer relationships. As a community leader and organizer I have never shied away from calling out racial bias, gender inequality, and other forms of oppression, whether it manifests locally or nationally. As a County Commissioner I would have an even further reaching platform from which to advocate for both the policy and culture change needed to ensure all people are treated with dignity and respect, and are free from violence, oppression, and discrimination.

How do you plan on addressing issues around poverty and homelessness in our area?

Our homelessness crisis and the high levels of poverty in our area are the result of many local, regional, and national factors. High on the list is the housing crisis (lack of affordability, quality, and inventory). Federal policies such as changes to programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “food stamps”) further erode the ability of families to make ends meet. We need to push back on these policies while also working to mitigate the impacts of them in the meantime. Import and export policy along with moves to outsource jobs and systematically gut the power of organized labor here at home is resulting in more low-wage, service industry jobs with little to no room for advancement or worker protections.

The number one goal for the County should be to ensure that we are providing the support folks need, including historically (and dangerously) underfunded addiction treatment programs and behavioral health services. We need to help people build skills and find meaningful employment while also providing supports for those unable to work. We need to stabilize people in long term housing, build more ADU’s
and affordable apartment complexes, as well as build more starter homes so that those on the path to home ownership can take advantage of historically low interest rates. The board of county commissioners is also the county’s housing authority and so as a commissioner I would work to maximize our effectiveness in leveraging state and federal dollars to build (subsidized) housing for low income residents while also working to streamline systems for issuing building permits for private developers. I want county and city officials to continue working together to solve this issue.

We can also tackle poverty and under-employment through significant economic development programs and projects, elevating industries that bring living wage jobs to the community and do not harm the environment.

CAMPAIGN QUESTIONS

Are there choices or decisions you have made in the past that we should be aware of in making our recommendation to support your candidacy?

I stand by my work both as a career nonprofit professional, and as an active community advocate and volunteer. My goals have always been to increase access to power for “regular folks” and to further equity and fairness, especially for women and working people. I am happy to discuss this more an in person meeting.

What are your three primary goals while serving in this position, both short term and longer term?

Improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities (this involves stable housing, adequate health care delivery, equitable educational opportunities, and more).

Building a robust, forward-thinking (local) economy and strengthening our workforce (focusing particularly on the region’s growing tech sector and our unique food and beverage industry innovators and entrepreneurs).

Protecting and preserving natural resources and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

How will those goals and your plans while in office benefit Higher Ed organized labor as well as the students we serve?

By creating a more labor-friendly climate and culture overall, as well as a more welcoming and thriving community for faculty, staff and students to live in. Additionally, many UO staff have spouses who may need non-academic employment, and/or have children enrolled in schools in Eugene, so it’s critical that the community as a whole be a safe, welcoming place for everyone to live, work, and play.

Why did you decide to run for this position?

Over the last 33 years, I’ve laid down deep roots here in Eugene, raised two kids and am now watching my grandsons grow up in this community I love. For decades I’ve been working professionally and as an active volunteer to deliver critical human services, as well as organizing and advocating with and for some of our most marginalized and least resourced neighbors. I served a three year term on the county Budget Committee and currently serve on the county’s Equity and Access Advisory Board. The county is, fundamentally, a service provider; delivering behavioral health services, running medical clinics, managing parks, roads, and bridges, public safety programs, local elections, and more. I’m excited to
bring all that I’ve learned through my years of grassroots organizing, my policy analysis and advocacy skills, plus my personal, lived experience to the role of county commissioner.

This will be an open seat for the first time in 24 years; Pete Sorenson announced he won’t be running again. To the best of my research, if I’m elected, it will be the first time a woman has represented the district in nearly 50 years, if ever.

**What other organizations are supporting your candidacy?**
Currently, my campaign is endorsed by nearly two dozen elected officials including Mayor Lucy Vinis, State Representatives Julie Fahey and Marty Wilde; Lane Community College Board Members Lisa Fragala, Angela VanKrause, and Chelsea Jennings; 4J School Board Members Mary Walston and Martina Shabram; as well as over 40 community leaders and activists (see www.laurietrieger.com/endorsements).

**What is your plan to win your election?**
To ensure a victory in May, my campaign is executing a robust field, fundraising, communications, and endorsement plan. We aim to raise $75,000 to $100,000, depending on how many people file for the seat. Our goal is to knock 20,000 doors which is 5,000 over the number of knockable doors in my district. Money raised will go toward hiring staff, sending out direct mail to voters, radio and potentially tv ads as well as executing an aggressive Get Out the Vote Plan during the last 4–6 weeks of the campaign. I look forward to giving you an update on progress toward these goals in person.

**What would UAUO’s endorsement mean to you?**
That I am a trusted voice for supporting working people, a voice for labor; as well as that I have a grasp of and respect for the value of quality education and its impact on the health of the community over all. It would mean that I have demonstrated a commitment to representing—and to serving—our community. And I would hope that it would mean your members would be advocates and ambassadors for my campaign, helping to get the word out about my candidacy and maybe volunteering to help, too. Finally, I like to think it would mean that we have a relationship that will extend beyond the campaign season and that I can call on representatives and members of United Academics for insights and perspective to inform my decision making as your commissioner.