

## DPLC Endorsement – May 2021 Election Voters' Guide

The DPLC will hold its endorsement meeting on March 18, 2021. The following candidates have requested our endorsement for the May 2021 School Board and Special District election. The DPLC may choose to endorse one Democrat, multiple Democrats, or no candidates in a race.

---

### **Austin Folnagy**

#### **Lane Community College Board, Zone 4**



My name is Austin Folnagy. I moved to Oregon for 10 years ago and have worked for the State of Oregon almost 10 years. I became a union member (SEIU 503) and an active member leader right from the beginning of my work with the state. I have been a strong, engaged, and active member leader ever since: ranging from Bargaining to General Council Delegate; president of sub-local to chief steward; Treasurer of our political action committee to a founding member of our Climate Justice Caucus. This diverse union experience along with training from the Oregon Labor Candidate school (class of 2013) gave me the opportunity to run and be successful as a Board Member of Klamath Community College (13-17). I then ran to be on the board of the Southern Oregon Education Service District and served before moving up to Lane County for a new job with my agency. I moved to the McKenzie River area and had to evacuate my home from the fires this last Sept, due to the Holiday Farm fire. The damages to my home prevent me from returning in the near future, but we are rebuilding and so is the community. It was the compassion and generosity of this community inspired me to want to give back to the community with the skillsets I have in policy development and workforce development strategy. We need to continue to develop a skilled and educated workforce, and we need skilled trades people to help rebuild my community. Lane Community College is the vessel to make that happen, and support working families in the process. I desire to become a champion of working families, and act in my roles as an elected leader with the same compassion and fortitude that my community has shown in the last year.

## Al King

### Lane Community College Board, Zone 5



I was a Democrat State Representative in Dist. 44 in 1999 and Dist. 11 in 2001. I served on the Springfield School Board for 13 years and served on the original Higher Education Coordinating Council which replaced the State Board of Higher Education. I am a former DPLC Treasurer.

I am thankful for Democratic success replacing Trump, regaining the House and Senate, and that Democrats control Oregon politics, and I believe Gov Brown is providing excellent leadership for Oregon.

After Ballot Measure 5 in 1990 Oregon had to divert most revenue to Basic Education. As a result, our colleges have been funded by higher tuition. LCC and UO rely on international students to pay higher out of state tuition as an important part of their budgets. Trump's immigration and China policies have been choking out this major source of tuition income. For example, a 1,000 student UO China student drop is a \$36,000,000 budget loss and 250 LCC student loss is about \$3,000,000 budget loss.

We need to preserve Oregon schools for Oregonian opportunity, but we are also dependent upon foreign student tuition revenue. I believe I can help LCC and Oregon to reattract this lost revenue and help avoid major budget cuts.

Thank you DPLC for performing this endorsement process.

## **Rose I. Wilde**

### **Lane Education Service District Board, Position 6 At-Large**

I have served on the board of Lane Education Service District since 2013. Lane ESD is a regional school district that supports the work of the 16 Lane County School Districts by providing shared services for all districts and customized services to individual districts - such as internet and technology support, special education services, school improvement, Migrant Education, Career and Technical Education, and African American/Black Student Success. We receive a portion of the funding that goes to each local district through the state school fund, as well as state and federal funding that we administer and implement on behalf of local school districts through a board adopted local service plan. The Superintendents' Council drafts the local service plan collaboratively, then each member school district board votes on the plan, which is updated annually.

As a board member at Lane ESD, I am accountable to the voters, the students, the staff, and the families of Lane ESD, as well as to the students, staff, and boards at each component district. I stay accountable to the districts I serve by visiting local board meetings (including Pleasant Hill, Lowell, and Blachly) and listening to their feedback in person and virtual meetings, and through our Superintendent evaluation processes.

One of my proudest accomplishments is hiring Superintendent Tony Scurto, whose excellent annual evaluations reflect the voices of our K-12 partners, ESD staff, and board members. We sought a Superintendent whose facilitative and convening style leadership necessary to work effectively with our component districts and the state. Superintendent Scurto's strong commitment to educational equity shows in his continued investment in diversifying our staff with the support of the board. This requires building a safe and welcoming environment, providing for staff education and professional development, and the development of culturally specific programming within the district.

I have also shared some of my own learning with school board members and educators through conferences and presentations on the topic of Confronting White Nationalism in Schools.

I currently serve as the Chair of the Oregon Association of ESDs, working with the Executive Director and the OAESD Governance Council to convene and facilitate the OAESD Equity and Racial Justice Task Force. The Task Force has brought up topics that are challenging the organization and members to grow. We have wrestled with how to maintain a focus on racial equity, while recognizing that other dynamics of diversity also impact student experiences across the state. These conversations must be had, and it is a privilege to serve in a time when my colleagues across the state are ready to dig in. I also advocate at a state and federal level on behalf of OAESD.

Lane ESD, as a regional school district that serves students through our partnership with local schools, does not attract much attention, but the work we do is profound and impacts every student in the community. It is my pleasure to be a nerd for Lane ESD and I would like to continue serving another four years.

**Anne Marie Levis**  
**Eugene 4J School Board, Position 2**

I am running for re-election to the 4J School board position #2 and would greatly appreciate being endorsed by the DPLC.

I believe I am the best candidate for this position for many reasons. I have a proven track record after three terms on the 4J school board of working tirelessly to create a better and more equitable school district focused on not only student achievement but also on the social and emotional wellbeing of our students. I am an active community volunteer who is focused on making this a better place for ALL families. I am a small business owner who has brought my skills and expertise to benefit the school system and I am a mother of a student in 4J. The breadth of my connections in the community and my dedication to the school district make me a valuable board member who is working hard for all our students.

In addition, I am a huge supporter of public schools and have been my whole life. Much of my volunteer time is spent focusing on improving public education. I have been a 4J school board member for the past 12 years; I volunteered to help pass the Lane Community College bond measure; and I am a volunteer on several boards at the UO. This time and volunteer effort is all to benefit and improve the public school system in this area.

In my time volunteering in 4J, I have gone above and beyond just being a member of the board. Currently, I am a member of the 4J Equity committee, the 4J Budget committee and am also on the 4J Eugene Education Foundation board. In addition, I volunteered to be one of three board members actively working to examine and dismantle systemic barriers and racism in the district. I was a founding member of the 'Student Needs Now' fund that has raised \$190,000 to be dedicated to our most vulnerable 4J families and to help support our "wrap around services" in wake of the pandemic. I also worked on the policy for 4J's sanctuary status after the 2016 election to provide safeguards for our most vulnerable immigrant community members. In addition, I have volunteered my time and my businesses services to pass the 4J bonds and levies which has enabled the school district to have the funds to build seven new schools and contributed up at \$19M per year to fund lower class sizes.

Finally, and on a personal level, I am endlessly curious about education and the ways to make systems and policies better. I am empathetic, caring, and willing to listen and learn. I care deeply about making sure that we have an equitable and inclusive system of education that gives opportunities to all students to be able to succeed. I have worked extremely hard over the past 12 years to make good decisions taking into account the voices of our students, our teachers, our staff and our community.

**Laural O'Rourke**  
**Eugene 4J School Board, Position 2**

I write today to ask for your endorsement as a candidate for the Eugene 4J school board, position 2. I am a life-long member of the Democratic party and have consistently supported Democratic party candidates in local, State and National elections since I was old enough to vote. As a progressive, black woman the issues that are most important to me are firmly part of the Democratic platform.

This is my first time to run for public office. I was surprised when Kitty Piercy suggested I run and even more surprised when others came forward to encourage me to do so. Most of this initial support came from people who know my work as a tireless advocate for those who have a difficult time advocating for themselves. Much of my professional life has been spent serving those facing extreme trauma compounded by generational poverty, mental illness, disability and/or addiction. Most recently I have been fortunate to be part of Lane County's emergency response working to help people devastated the by the Holiday Farm Fire get the support and services they need. I have a deep passion for service on behalf of those whose voices are not often heard.

I believe we desperately need diversity on the 4J school board. I understand in a deep personal way what it means to be treated differently based on what one looks like. We can't afford to have biases in our school systems that drive away good teachers of color and marginalize black and brown students and fails to equip them with the skills they need for success or does little to instill hope for what they can eventually become. I have been that student.

I also have 5 children that have graduated from or are currently enrolled in 4j schools. Three of them have learning challenges and IEPs and I have had to tirelessly advocate to have their accommodations met. Parents of children that struggle in the classroom should not have to fight so hard to ensure their children get equitable outcomes in their education. I will push to ensure there is equity in how we treat our District staff and students.

Here are a few specific things I plan to advocate for if elected:

Nearly one third of high school graduates do not attend college. I want all district graduates prepared, just not college-bound kids, for a future where they can make a livable wage. Our educational system is exacerbating poverty and homelessness by not preparing all our youth for economic independence. Progress has been made in establishing Career and Technical Education (CET) in the district but it has not been fully funded or implemented comprehensively. I will work to see that we build a robust, equitable CTE program throughout 4j.

Respectful communication, characterized by active listening and regular, transparent communication is key to a board that values equity and access. Our parents and teachers know what students need. Policies of the board need to reflect this input. Parents should be informed of their rights and need to be communicated with in ways that are clear, accessible and using language they understand.

A diverse teacher workforce with strong representation from black and indigenous communities would be a powerful force for change within the system. Research shows that all students, and especially students of color, benefit from having teachers of color. And since teachers of color leave the profession at higher rates we need to ensure they feel supported and proactively identify ways to retain them.

I am ready to step up and do this work. I need the support of organizations like the DPLC to get there. For all the reasons above, I ask for your endorsement.

**Tom Di Liberto**

**Eugene 4J School Board, Position 3**



Schools will soon emerge from one of the greatest educational crises in a generation. We have realized we can do things we previously thought impossible (like provide tablets and computers to all students to allow us to continue providing instruction). We have also learned that schools do many things for our lives we previously took for granted—for example—schools provide our children with a sense of community and connectedness necessary for their growth and well-being. This moment presents us with a chance to look at our schools with new eyes. Now more than ever we need leadership with a deep understanding of what K-12 students need and what a school district should provide to help us come out of this crisis.

I believe it is time to have an experienced classroom teacher on the Board who has seen how its decisions ultimately affect students. 4J has not had someone with extensive classroom experience on the board in over 30 years. I understand how concerned parents are about their children and how District policies influence them. If elected, I will help the Board be more responsive to parent concerns and more attentive to the way District policies affect kids' learning experience.

I am a recently retired 4J teacher of 31 years – all at Monroe Middle School—where I was hired as the first secondary language immersion teacher in the District. I taught Spanish and English language arts and social studies in Spanish to thousands of students over the years. To this day, I remain in touch with scores of students and their families.

In addition to my extensive classroom experience, I have been a strong advocate for students and staff through my work as bargaining chair for the Eugene Education Association, which represents 4J's 900+ licensed teachers and specialists. I've served on a variety of joint teacher/administrator teams that have worked collaboratively to resolve District issues. This experience has given me a strong grounding in the fiscal realities and complex decisions involved in crafting District budgets, priorities, and practices.

I've seen a dramatic shift in 4J that used a process that empowered stakeholders to help shape schools, to a more top-down, centralized approach. One of my top priorities is to restore a better balance in decision-making by improving stakeholder communication at both formal meetings as well as by expanding informal fact-finding input sessions. Board members need to better understand what is happening or not happening in our schools. I see this as a vital element in determining District policy and practice.

In addition to concentrating on more open, expanded communication in our District, I plan to focus on these pressing issues facing District 4J:

- Reopening our schools in a safe, sensible way
- Ensuring equity in all decision making
- Reducing class and caseload size
- Teacher mentoring
- Rebalancing overuse of standardized testing
- Student mental health
- Teaching the whole child

As a life-long Democrat, I would be honored to have this body's endorsement.

## Judy Newman

### Eugene 4J School Board, Position 3



Fellow Democrats and Friends,

I serve on the School Board because I have a passion about public education. I have spent my entire career in education – paid and volunteer! I come from a family of educators. Our dinner conversations are often about education. I thought this was normal, but realized this is not true of all families.

I have always been drawn to the “underdog”. Being Jewish with immigrant grandparents and the scars of WWII, my dad taught immigrants. I volunteered at a camp for children with disabilities from the inner city of Milwaukee. I was an undergraduate ethnic studies major and participated in civil rights movements. I learned to speak up against oppression and racism, ableism and anti-Semitism. I became a special education teacher and realized that kids and families needed help at an early age if they were to have a fighting chance.

I co-founded “EC CARES” 35 years ago to provide early intervention to children with disabilities, and to support and teach families and help them learn to be advocates for their children. We have touched the lives of over 25,000 children and parents in Lane county - giving these kids a better start in life and equipping them to be successful in school and life. I still keep in touch with many of these kids and parents.

Four years ago, local educators asked me to run for school board because they thought my experience, knowledge, and skills in early learning and special education - as well as my skill in bringing people together to solve problems, and my respect for the education profession - were needed. I never saw myself running for office although I knew I wanted to step up to have an impact at a bigger level. I decided to run for the open seat and was elected! I am the first person with early learning and special education experience and knowledge ever to serve on the 4J school board. I have been an asset to the board and I am a hard worker and I earn every penny of my pay!

This past year has been VERY challenging with many ups and downs. We are faced with many decisions but no great choices. We finally have a pathway to bring kids and staff back safely to in-person school. We are preparing to address the needs of students as they present.

In summary the skills I bring to my position on the school board are:

I can bring people to the table, establish partnerships- and get things done

I listen to all voices and all points of view when making decisions

I know early learning and how to align with K-12

I am focused on elevating equity work in education

I have been involved with Career Technical education (CTE) expansion

I am a proven advocate to expand funding for education

As a lifelong Democrat and a Eugene PCP, I would be honored to be endorsed by the Democratic party of Lane County!

## **Maya Rabasa**

### **Eugene 4J School Board, Position 6**

Before everything else, I am the mother of three children, and have been a 4J parent for 14 years, with 9 more to go before my youngest graduates.

My story begins over 40 years ago when my father brought my family to the US from Mexico. I grew up in a family where we spoke Spanish and French at home, learning English in our public schools. During my years in public school, I also learned that when children develop their sense of self worth it is often a reflection of how others see them. And too many of my friends with similar backgrounds did not see a reflection that showed them they could and would succeed. They did not receive a message that they were valued. They received a message that they were an issue to be handled.

Like many young people, I began to dream of becoming a teacher - but for me it was not a romanticized vision of teaching that propelled me, but rather my vision came from a place of seeing injustice occur in the classroom, on the playground, in the curriculum, in all facets of our school system. I knew I wanted to be a part of the change that I considered - and still consider - imperative. So, for the past 30 years, I have dedicated myself to the educational arena - first as a teacher at all levels from early childhood through undergraduate classrooms, then as a dedicated volunteer.

Let us fast forward to today. I left the classroom when my oldest started kindergarten, in order to volunteer in his school to fill debilitating holes resulting from budget shortfalls. During the past 14 years, I have put in almost 6,000 hours volunteering on the ground in over a dozen different 4J schools. Additionally, I also serve on two advisory committees - 4J's Equity Committee and Budget Committee.

This volunteer experience, specifically the time spent in our schools, coupled with my own experience as a teacher, affords me a unique window. This experience allows me to witness what district policy looks like when put into practice by teachers, school staff, and volunteers. It shows me where and how our schools continue to face challenges, as well as what innovations and shifts in practice are proving to be successful. At the forefront of this insight, is a sincere understanding that representation and prioritizing diverse perspectives and expertise are vital for a healthy district. This understanding serves as the cornerstone of my value system. I sincerely value the voice and expertise of our students, staff, families - our community. I am committed to strengthening the bridge between district leadership and all district stakeholders and will always bring genuine community involvement into the decision-making arena.

By endorsing me for Position 6 on the Eugene School District Board of Directors, you will not only help to bring my voice to the table, you will help to bring our whole community to the table. Because where I go, I bring you with me.



**Emilio Hernandez Jr., PhD**  
**Springfield School Board, Position 2**



With my career in education (over 25 years) this past year has been one of the most difficult. The Corona virus has put us all into a tailspin. Schools are now dealing with the confusing decision to have our children return to school buildings or continue with on line learning. As a retired educator, I know the value of in person teaching/learning. Hybrid learning is difficult for some of our families living in multi-generational homes. With my extensive experience serving on locally, state, and national educational boards, I see my background as a positive to assist Springfield School district move forward with its current plans. The next phase of schools re-opening comes with a significant need for all of us to be open and caring for ALL students, and make that a community goal. My background as a migrant worker, growing up in poverty has given me the life experience to understand what some in our community are living through. As a community, I see it essential that we all work together for all our children, so they will grow in a healthy environment and learn how to work together to avoid our current struggles.