Rural Oregonians are resilient and fiercely interdependent. We are currently facing a series of overlapping crises including COVID-19 outbreaks, wildfires tearing through our communities, attacks on the postal system, massive unemployment, political unrest, and deep polarization in our communities. Times are scary and it is hard to know what to expect next.

This isn’t the first time we have faced tragedies. We know all too well how important our neighborhood phone trees are when fire evacuation notification systems (if they exist at all) don’t reach all of us and we don’t have 24-hour 911 dispatch to rely on. To keep one another safe, we continually build networks of community support, demonstrating the care and commitment we have for each other and proving that together we can build solutions. We have weathered storms and adapted to new normals before. But these current overlapping crises combined with crumbling roads, schools, and bridges make this election season the most critical one we have ever faced.

Here at ROP, we have seen rural communities across Oregon set up mutual aid networks to help families and communities survive the fallout from fraying social safety nets. As thousands evacuated their homes due to the wildfires, we opened up respite sites and shelters, cooked and served meals, and met new friends and neighbors showing up for each other. We are now helping rebuild our communities and supporting essential workers who have been unable to get access to unemployment or other aid. We are taking care of each other’s children as families figure out how to navigate school and childcare in the middle of a pandemic.

Now we need to take that spirit of mutual aid to the polls. By working together with our neighbors, we can create the future we want. It’s going to mean making sure that we exercise our continued on page 3
**OREGON BALLOT MEASURES**

**Do these measures advance democracy?**

**107**

Yes

Oregon is one of only five states with no limits on contributions, which allows special interests and huge corporations to contribute millions of dollars and sway our elections to support their own bottom line. Measure 107 would amend the state constitution to allow the state, cities and counties to limit political contributions and spending while still making sure candidates can get the resources they need to run campaigns. It would also require that campaigns disclose the source of all contributions and expenses, including political ads. Passing Measure 107 would help protect our elections from out-of-state interests and large corporations.

**108**

You Decide

Measure 108 would increase taxes on tobacco products and inhalant delivery systems such as e-cigarettes and vapes. The money generated from the tax would help fund the Oregon Health Plan and other healthcare-related programs including those that prevent smoking and help people quit. The tax applies to distributors of tobacco products, which includes anyone in the state who manufactures, transports, or sells those products.

While this tax might discourage some people from continuing or starting to use tobacco products, it also lets tobacco companies off the hook. Oregonians pay $1.5 billion per year in smoking-related health care costs while Big Tobacco continues to profit from tobacco products. This tax won’t fix that or the fact that tobacco manufacturers won’t be held responsible for the impact and the actual cost to Oregonians that are directly caused by the products they create.

**109**

Yes

Measure 109 would create a new avenue of mental health care free from the control of pharmaceutical companies. The measure would legalize psilocybin treatment by creating the Oregon Psilocybin Services Program under the Oregon Health Authority. Studies from Johns Hopkins University and beyond show that psilocybin is an effective treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and end of life care. Measure 109 would permit patients 21 years and older to access this treatment after receiving a referral from a doctor and only through a licensed psilocybin service center under the care of a trained facilitator.

**110**

Yes

Oregon ranks 50th in the nation for drug treatment availability. Measure 110 would decriminalize possession of certain drugs and establish a statewide drug addiction treatment and recovery program funded by the state’s marijuana tax revenue. Many of us know all too well the pain of seeing a loved one struggle with addiction and know that drug treatment options are especially hard to find in rural Oregon. While we are working to make ends meet, afford healthcare, or recover from addiction, big drug corporations rake in record profits, all while putting treatment out of reach for most of us. People suffering from addiction need access to care, not criminal punishment.

**WHO BELONGS?**

At the height of this year’s fires, 500,000 people in Oregon were under evacuation notices. This sounds familiar to families who trace their own migration back to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Forced off of their farmland that had become a dust-choked desert, the refugees from that climate disaster were called Okies, and many made their way west to form the communities we know today. In the communities where they tried to shelter, billboards read “Jobless Men, Keep Going” and local police threw refugees in jail for vagrancy. They were frequently met by vigilantes who attacked their camps or set up armed roadblocks on the roads leading into town.

During our 2020 fires, the roadblocks returned. False rumors that people of a particular political persuasion were starting the fires spread faster than the flames. These rumors were so hazardous that the FBI, state police, and local sheriffs departments issued public statements declaring the rumors false and pleading with Oregonians to stop their spread. Nevertheless, people were stopped outside their towns because “they didn’t look like they belonged.” All too often, these were people of color.

These roadblocks were an outgrowth of a summer of armed vigilante action throughout Oregon. The protests against the murder of George Floyd and in favor of equal protection under the law spread peacefully across rural communities. Thousands of neighbors from every county in our state organized vigils to declare that Black Lives Matter and to oppose police violence. Almost immediately, heavily armed men began confronting peaceful protests, motivated by false rumors that “Antifa” was coming to attack their towns. The armed vigilantes squared off against their fellow townspeople often shouting or waving their weapons at people kneeling on the ground. To the people who fancied themselves “militia,” the protesters “didn’t look like they belonged,” even though they often had deep ties to the community.

As we struggle through an economic crash caused by a pandemic virus, we ask ourselves, “who belongs?” Who gets to have health coverage? Who is entitled to job safety as they do essential work? Who gets access to housing?

continued on page 3

**DE-MOC+RA+CY**

(noun)

If democracy is to work, it must continue to uphold some basic principles. Here are four principles of democracy according to the World Book Encyclopedia:

1. **Inclusion of all and equality for all**
   “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [people] are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”
   —US DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

2. **Majority rule and rights for all**
   “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”
   —14TH AMENDMENT, US CONSTITUTION

3. **Well-educated and well-informed people who participate in the democratic process**
   “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”
   —1ST AMENDMENT, US CONSTITUTION

4. **A reasonable standard of living**
   “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [themselves] and [their] family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age and other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control.”
   —ARTICLE 25, UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ADOPTED BY UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (US INCLUDED) 1948
3. Majority rule and rights for all: Will this candidate defend our democracy by ensuring that our election remains free and fair and that all votes are counted so that majority rules? Are they committed to respecting the rights of the minority to freely express their disagreement?

4. Well-educated and well-informed people who participate in the democratic process: Will this candidate prioritize educating our youth? Have we felt the devastating effects of underfunding in our schools, even before the pandemic forced teachers to transition to virtual classrooms, where not every student has reliable high speed internet. Does this candidate see the value in bolstering community media? We’ve seen local media sources bought up by out-of-state corporations or go under completely, when we most need them to deliver information that can be literally lifesaving, like evacuation notices and where to find wildfire relief.

4. A reasonable standard of living: Will this candidate fight to ensure that people hit hardest by historic unemployment, wildfire, or the impact of COVID have their basic needs met? Oregon has never had as many millionaires as we do today, while there are also more people struggling to feed their families than ever before. Will they represent the interests of everyday people even if it means making corporations pay their fair share so that the rest of us can access affordable housing, medical care, healthy food and dignified jobs?

RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT is a statewide network of locally-based groups who share a commitment to human dignity: the belief in the equal worth of all people, the need for equal access to justice and the right to self-determination. Get in touch with us. Let’s organize!

IT TAKES ALL OF US
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right to vote in record numbers, making sure that everyone who wants to vote can, and then making sure that every vote is counted. We know that no one candidate will provide a magic bullet, but voting for candidates with a vision of safe and welcoming communities for all is one simple way for many of us to participate in advancing democracy.

The common work of caring for our families, our homes, and our communities binds us together. We may have different politics or philosophies, but we all share common concerns for home, health and a voice in the decisions that affect our lives. Engaging in the democratic election process is one way to help our communities grow, but it can’t stop there. Talk to your neighbors about important and difficult issues. Contact candidates to ask them questions and hold them accountable. Share your opinion online and through letters to local newspapers. Organize and bring people together to take action for positive change in your community.

The Rural Organizing Project is a statewide network of locally-based groups who share a commitment to human dignity: the belief in the equal worth of all people, the need for equal access to justice and the right to self-determination. Get in touch with us. Let’s organize!

WHO BELONGS?
continued from page 2

Oregon workers produce a $50 billion dollar agricultural economy. Yet many immigrants are being told to labor for minimal pay in hazardous, smoky conditions without proper housing or protective equipment. Many face the threat of deportation if they speak up.

For the past 40 years, federal funding for affordable housing went from building 38,650 rural affordable housing units to building 763 in 2011, and zero since 2012. The money is still there, but funding switched from housing for those most in need to military spending and tax write-offs for home owners. Long before the fires, thousands of people didn’t have reliable housing. Many folks without housing found shelter in the woods that have now burned down. With thousands made newly houseless by fires, and those already out of doors now displaced once more, the question of “who belongs?” has never been more critical.

Rural Organizing Project’s vision is simple: if you call rural Oregon home, you belong. This election season, we have an opportunity to vote in candidates that share that vision and talk to our neighbors about how to make our communities safe and welcoming for all.
ROADMAP TO A THRIVING RURAL OREGON

See page 3 for more details!

We Are All Essential
- Healthy and accessible learning environments for all children
- Universal basic income
- Free childcare for all
- Safe housing, childcare, schools & workplaces
- Healthy food and clean water for all

Healthy People Make Healthy Communities
- COVID testing, tracing and treatment sites
- Release people held in unsafe conditions
- Sustainable, local food production
- Health care for everyone

Safe and Welcoming Communities
- Invest in rural Oregon for the long haul
- Safety from state violence
- Forgive rent and mortgages
- Inclusive democracy for all

Connecting Our Voices
- Fully fund the United States Postal Service
- Publicly-funded community media
- Celebrate rural Oregon’s mosaic of experiences
- Broadband internet for all