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Fight for equality calls for bold legislative agenda

Viewpoint by Laurie Trieger

For *The Register-Guard*

February 14, 2017

The Nov. 8 election was a reminder that when our shared economic and social interests are divided, racism, sexism, fear and hate can spread.

Our communities are deeply worried by the results of this election. Throughout the campaign and since the election, we've heard about — or worse, experienced — an alarming rise in hate speech, discrimination and racist incidents across the country and in our state.

Communities of color have always known such injustices exist. It's clearer now than ever before: Our solidarity and resistance are required for us to all have a fair shot.

The Fair Shot for All Coalition has been working collaboratively during the past two years and has made hard-earned gains for all Oregonians through our Legislature — gains such as passing higher wages so no one working full time has to live in poverty; making paid sick days the law so no one has to choose between working sick and losing income; ensuring greater job opportunities for people with prior convictions and arrests; banning profiling by law enforcement; and establishing a secure way for everyone to save for retirement.

Strong coalitions like ours will make sure these wins are not erased and that we continue to make progress.

But with real barriers still standing in the way of safety, access to health care, economic stability and racial justice, our work is far from over. Oregon has an opportunity and a responsibility to continue to lead the rest of the country in tackling historic and systemic inequalities that have been standing in our way for generations. We can be a ray of hope — we can make a real difference in the lives of Oregonians, and lead the nation in the fight to advance racial, gender and economic justice.

That means standing strong to send the message that hate and discrimination have no place in Oregon.

It also means working hard to create the kind of Oregon we want to live in: a state where everyone — regardless of race, gender, the language we speak or where we're from — strives to achieve the chance to earn a decent living, to gain access to critical health services without going into debt, to be able to care for our families at their most vulnerable times and to live in a stable home in a safe community where our civil and economic rights are protected every step of the way. Our legislative agenda for 2017 is aimed at tackling inequalities that are deeply ingrained in our social and political institutions. It's a bold agenda that keeps Oregon leading the nation in the fight to advance racial, gender and economic justice:

Cover all kids: This legislative proposal would put every child on a pathway to success by extending health care coverage for all kids in Oregon, including the 17,600 children who are currently excluded from public insurance.

End profiling: This bill builds on Oregon's 2015 ban on police profiling by creating the structure

to effectively identify, record and correct any profiling practices by Oregon law enforcement agencies.

Stable homes: This proposal would help working families maintain housing stability and curb homelessness by protecting tenants from losing their homes through no fault of their own.

Paid family and medical leave: This bill would ensure that Oregonians can take time away from work — to welcome a new child, take care of a seriously ill family member, care for someone they love at the end of their life, or recover from a serious illness or injury themselves — without losing the income their family relies on.

Reproductive health equity: This legislative proposal would prevent Oregonians from facing significant health and economic challenges by ensuring affordable access to the full range of reproductive health services for all.

Join us from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday at Whirled Pies, 199 W. Eighth Ave. in Eugene, as we kick off the 2017 legislative session, learn about our policy goals and discuss how everyone can be part of this critical movement for all Oregonians.

Laurie Trieger is the regional outreach director for Family Forward Oregon and a founding member of the Fair Shot for All Coalition.