

Union leaders back gov's re-election bid

BY PATRICK GUINANE

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INDIANAPOLIS | A bevy of Indiana labor leaders gathered at a five-star Indianapolis hotel Thursday to endorse the re-election campaign of Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels.

The union officials praised the massive "Major Moves" road building plan the first-term governor financed with last year's \$3.8 billion private lease of the Indiana Toll Road. And they took a jab at Democratic leaders in Illinois for failing to reach agreement on a similar public works program.

"Major Moves has brought in probably \$4 billion now, with (accrued) interest, for infrastructure," said David Fagan, the Merrillville-based financial secretary for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150. "Compare that to our neighbor to the west (Illinois). They're looking at losing \$6.5 billion (in federal road funding) if they do not come up with state funding for capital projects."

Leaders representing union carpenters, masons, sheet metal workers and Teamsters also announced their support Thursday, with several of them standing behind the governor during an evening news conference at the Conrad Hotel in downtown Indianapolis.

"None of the endorsements which have happened and are going to happen in our campaign are more important than these," Daniels said. "We will not agree on every issue with the organizations here, but we've been able to speak honestly with each other and deal straight."

Daniels rescinded the collective bargaining rights of state employees shortly after taking office in 2005. Both his Democratic opponents have pledged to immediately restore those benefits.

Jill Long Thompson, a former congresswoman from the Fort Wayne area, and Jim Schellinger, an Indianapolis architect making his first run at public office, will square off in the May Democratic primary for a shot at taking on the incumbent governor in November.

Union leaders endorsing Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels

- Casper Alessi Jr., former national representative and regional political director, AFL-CIO
- Danny Barton, president, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 135
- Brian Buhle, vice president, Teamsters Joint Council 69
- Dave Collins, executive director, International Masonry Institute, Indiana-Kentucky office
- Blaine Davidson, president and business manager Operating Engineers Local 841
- [William Dugan, president and business manager, Operating Engineers Local 150](#)
- [David Fagan, financial secretary, Operating Engineers Local 150](#)
- Phil Gillespie, executive director, Sheet Metal Contractors Association of Central Indiana
- David Tharp, executive secretary and treasurer, Indiana Regional Council of Carpenters
- [Bruce Tarvin, president, Operating Engineers Local 103](#)