

Brown, Buehler spar in last debate

PORTLAND (AP) — Distinctions emerged between Oregon's leading gubernatorial candidates in their final debate as the two clashed public pensions, immigration, the state's housing crisis and several other hot-button issues.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that Rep. Knute Buehler on Tuesday sought to make the case a Republican can lead a distinctly Democratic state, declaring flatly he would approve no new restrictions on reproductive rights as governor. He accused Democratic Gov. Kate Brown of being ineffectual during her long stint in state government, noting that Oregon school districts are cutting teaching positions despite record revenue.

"The most important question facing all of us right now is our underperforming K-12 education system," Buehler said, arguing that Oregon's public pension obligations are siphoning money away from school spending. "Those dollars aren't getting into the classroom," Buehler said.

For her part, Brown sought to undercut Buehler's credibility — attacking his positions on the environment, school spending and for courting the vote of abortion opponents before he became the Republican gubernatorial nominee.

"Rep. Buehler tells some voters one thing and other

voters another," Brown said. "Unfortunately, that game won't work tonight because the whole state is watching."

Beyond the rhetoric, the candidates took substantive, divergent positions on key topics. The candidates returned repeatedly to the state's public pension crisis, the state's biggest fiscal issue. Buehler said he wants to transition state employees to a private-sector style, 401(k) retirement plan and accused the governor of "pandering" to public employee unions by raising pay before instituting broad pension reform.

While Brown said public employees "need to have some skin in the game," and pay some of their own pension costs, she didn't answer a direct question of how much they should pay. The governor resisted the notion of wholesale cuts, attacking Buehler directly: "I think it's easy for a millionaire to say he's going to cut the retirements of hard-working Oregonians. I'm not willing to do that."

The candidates were in broad agreement that political discourse must improve, and both faulted President Donald Trump for his words and actions. They also endorsed the scientific consensus around climate change, though Brown endorsed stricter rules governing carbon emissions while Buehler said he wants more flexibility.

Adair vies for county commission seat

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

After defeating long-time incumbent Tammy Baney in the Republican primary last May, Sisters resident Patti Adair is squaring off in the November mid-term election against Democrat James Cook in a contest for Position 3 on the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners.

Adair, who campaigned hard on concerns over the impact of marijuana production in the rural county, told *The Nugget* that she is pleased with recent efforts to crack down on illegal grows and to enforce code restrictions.

"They have tightened up," she said. "I think they've done a good job of listening to people. I'm happy with what they've done."

Like candidates and officials at every level of government, Adair recognizes that the county — and Sisters Country in particular — is wrestling with tensions between economic growth and quality of life, and that housing costs are having a big impact on people's lives.

She notes that young people who work at Sisters businesses have a hard time finding a place to live on their own.

"They're all living with their parents," she said.

The county is limited in what it can do regarding housing, but Adair said she supports loosening regulations

on accessory dwelling units, and believes that the county should use assets to assist Habitat for Humanity.

"I really believe in the Habitat program," she told *The Nugget*. "The county has a portfolio of assets and sometimes they are gifted to Habitat. I think that's a good use of a county resource."

The county does own land, but not in the Sisters area.

During her primary campaign, Adair criticized the county commissioners for setting staff salaries based on comparisons with western Oregon counties with a higher median income. She thinks those salaries are out of line with the private sector.

"I don't feel like our salaries have to be quite so high to attract wonderful people."
— Patti Adair

"The county employees are definitely making more than the average Deschutes County family," she said.

Adair believes that, because of the region's attractive lifestyle, the county does not need to pay a premium to attract employees.

"I feel like we have a lot of advantages," she said. "I don't feel like our salaries have to be quite so high to attract wonderful people."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Patti Adair is the Republican candidate for Position 3.

She believes that a 3 percent pay raise was "probably more than was necessary."

Asked if she was advocating for cuts, she said she is not.

"I just think we really need to watch it," she said.

Adair wants to see the county review its fee schedule and speed up permitting processes.

She continues to be concerned about upward pressure on property taxes, especially for those on a fixed income, and wants to see the county continue to cut when possible and avoid increases.

Adair told *The Nugget* that she is very interested in partnering with state and federal agencies to aggressively work on "cleaning up our forest" to prevent or mitigate wildfires which have had a significant impact disrupting the lives and the economy of the entire region — and Sisters in particular.

Adair, 67, is a former certified public accountant and has chaired the Deschutes County Republican Party for the past two years.

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