

State representative candidates vow harmony

■ Incumbent Vicki L. Walker and challenger Jeff Miller both pledge to promote bipartisanship in the House

By Lindsay Buchele
Oregon Daily Emerald

State Rep. Vicki L. Walker, D-Eugene, who is running for re-election to the state House seat representing the University area, said her biggest strength is her ability to push legislation through an extremely partisan state legislature. Republican challenger Jeff Miller, however, said his experience as a former mayor of



WALKER

Incumbent Walker

Walker said she became interested in government workings as a high school student. She earned a degree in political science and, as an adult, became involved in county politics. She started her own business as a court reporter but waited to pursue politics until her children were grown.

MILLER

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"My daughter asked me why I wasn't running for a political office," Walker said. "She told me, 'Mom, I graduate in a year. I'm grown up.' So, I ran for the 41st District seat."

In 1998, she was elected to the seat and served her two-year term. During her first term, she served on the Transportation, Trade and Eco-

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Vicki Walker
state representative

conomic Development, and Legislative Counsel committees.

"I'm really working on cleaning up the travel industry," Walker said. "My daughter was one of the students from Sheldon High School who went on a senior trip to Mexico and were subjected to a wet T-shirt contest during the flight."

Walker said she wants to stop such incidents. She also wants to stop travel agencies from promising high school and college students quality

trips and then ripping them off.

Other issues Walker focused on during the last state legislative session included controlling the use of pesticides, making youth suicide prevention a priority of the state, increasing funding for secondary and higher education and cracking down on car title loans that target and take advantage of low-income families.

"I've always been a go-getter," Walker said. "I was the main sponsor of the pesticide bill, which is only the third of its kind in the country."

The pesticide bill requires businesses and government agencies to report the product, amount, purpose, location and month of pesticide applications. This bill required support from both Republicans and Democrats, as do most of the bills she supports, she said.

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"I have known Vicki Walker for years," said U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., in a written statement. "We have worked together on a variety of issues including education and health care for our shared constituents. She stood up against special interests in Salem and performed well in what was a difficult partisan session. She deserves re-election."

Challenger Miller

Miller said his small business ex-

perience has helped him realize that "thinking outside the box" on important issues will help the Oregon government discover solutions to its problems.

He notes that both Republicans and Democrats in the Oregon State Legislature support his nomination. He said he decided to run for the office after receiving 600 write-in nominations from legislators and

“I was asked to run for this office because I know how to bring people together for a common objective. ... We need to throw out different ideas and then test them in the real world so we can see what works and what doesn't. ... I want to bring people together in politics and not worry about crossing party lines.”

Jeff Miller
former Eugene mayor

members of the Eugene community.

"I was asked to run for this office because I know how to bring people together for a common objective," Miller said.

His political background itself is diverse, Miller said. He served on the Eugene City Council and was mayor from 1989 to 1993. As may-

or, he focused on human rights issues and convinced leaders from major Eugene businesses, organizations and agencies to sign an anti-discrimination agreement, the Human Rights Value Statement.

Miller has owned a small insurance business in Eugene, Pacific Benefit Consultants/Eugene Insurance, for four years. Miller said having more than 10 years of experience in the insurance business has helped him better understand Oregon's health insurance needs.

"We need to throw out different ideas [for insurance and other issues] and then test them in the real world so we can see what works and what doesn't," Miller said.

As for the school funding issue, Miller said he wants to give power back to the local school districts, allowing them to decide what's best for their own spending. In regard to the criminal justice system, Miller said prevention during the preschool years will keep kids out of prison later in life.

"Overall, we need to be listening to the people and creating policies that will benefit society as a whole," Miller said.

Miller said he is a big supporter of local control and opposes partisan politics.

"I want to bring people together in politics and not worry about crossing party lines," Miller said.

Paula Cates, a public elementary school teacher, said children need leaders like Jeff Miller who care enough to ask questions and find answers. She also said Jeff Miller will cross party lines to make sure the public school system is well funded in the next budget cycle.

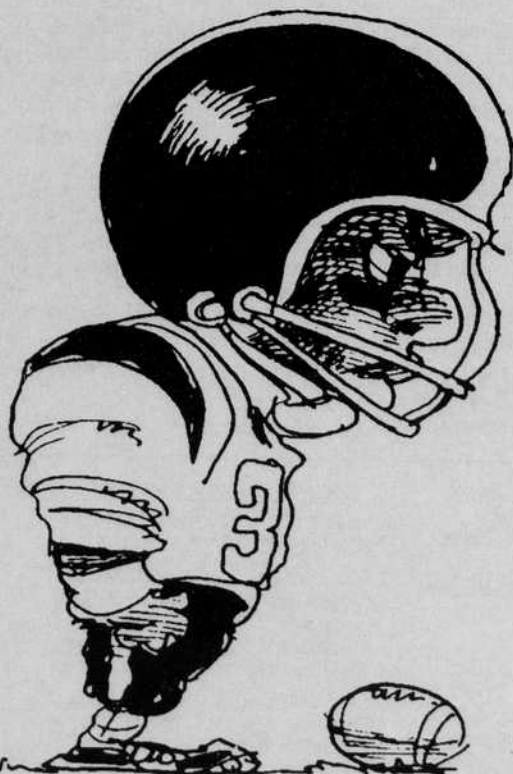
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