

Possible Kitzhaber run divides Democratic Party

BY CHARLES E. BEGGS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUNRIVER, Ore. — Former Gov. John Kitzhaber's appearance at a weekend conclave of Oregon Democrats fueled more talk of his possible return to state politics, perhaps challenging Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski in a primary that's already being eyed by three other Democratic officeholders.

Kitzhaber won't flatly rule out a comeback bid, saying only that he has no present plans to do so. He told the press last month that people are urging him to run.

"I have no political action committee. I have raised no money," he said in an interview during the state party's biennial Summit conference.

That, of course, doesn't mean he couldn't gear up a campaign before the March 7 filing deadline for the May primary.

Kitzhaber by law couldn't run for third successive term and was succeeded by Kulongoski in the 2002 election.

Kitzhaber scolded the party in a conference speech, saying Democrats and Republicans are "skillfully evading the real questions of the day."

Officeholders are avoiding risk-taking and boldness, he said, and worrying mostly about the next election and the interest groups from which they will seek money.

"We need to lead the base, not just react to it," he advised his fellow Democrats.

He drew hearty applause. So did Kulongoski, often interrupted in his talk as the meeting opened Friday. Kitzhaber made another speech Sunday on his forte — health care — an issue that's occupying him full-time since he left office.

Some said they wouldn't oppose a Kitzhaber comeback effort.

"Kitzhaber impressed me a little more" in his conference speeches than did Kulongoski, said Donald Gunderhus of Eugene, a retired astronomer who moved to Oregon in 2000. "I would consider supporting Kitzhaber."

But his wife, Gloria Gunderhus, said Kulongoski "hasn't had enough time to show his effectiveness. He deserves another term."

Some Democratic officeholders such as state Rep. Diane Rosenbaum of Portland, while avoiding criticizing Kulongoski, say election competition is a healthy thing.

"Competition in the primary helps focus the debate," she said. Party leaders downplay any chance of Kitzhaber running in the May primary.

"It's a nonstarter," said state Democratic Chairman Jim Edmunson of Eugene — "spice for the salad course" of the coming campaigns, he added. "I have a suspicion the talk is from folks with wishful thinking about the good old days."

"I can't imagine what it would

take to deny Gov. Kulongoski the nomination," Edmunson said.

State Sens. Vicki Walker and Rick Metsger are considering taking on Kulongoski in the primary. Lane County Commissioner Peter Sorenson, a Democrat, is the only contender who has announced he will challenge the governor and has been running since January.

None of the three has run statewide and face tough odds getting name recognition to match Kulongoski's. Gunderhus, of Eugene, said he knew little of Sorenson despite living Eugene, the Lane County seat.

Metsger said he plans to decide by Nov. 1 whether he will run. Walker, an outspoken Kulongoski critic, had previously said she would make a decision by January but now says it will be "very soon."

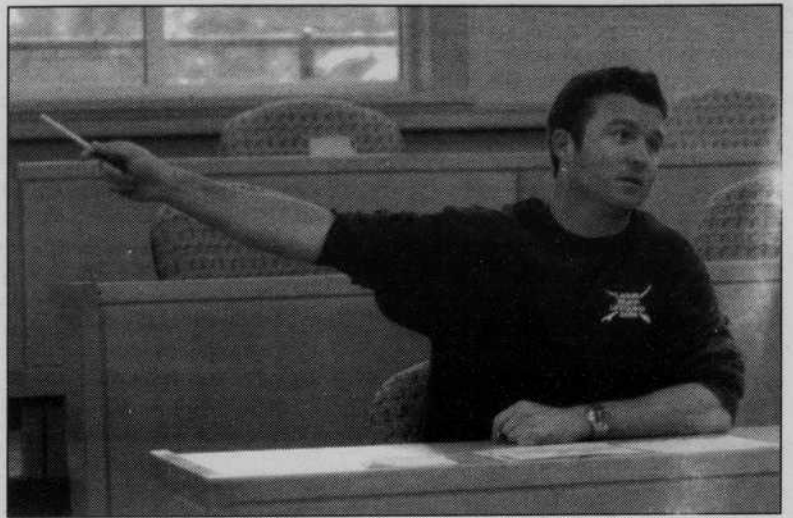
Kitzhaber says nothing about when he might make a definitive statement.

He refrained from criticizing Kulongoski by name, whom he backed in 2002, but referred to the state's "vacuum of leadership."

"If it's unclear what he's doing to do, it creates background noise and makes it hard to raise money," Kulongoski said in an interview.

He said he's disappointed that Kitzhaber, whom he said remains a friend and whom he has known since they served in the Legislature in the late 1970s, might oppose him.

"But disappointment doesn't mean anger," Kulongoski said. "Any resentment is very self-serving. Things may be said that will hurt."



KAI-HUEI YAU | FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER

During a meeting in 141 Knight Law Center, SBA President Ed Wilson explains the reasoning behind the law school's proposal to manage its funds autonomously.

Law: Student groups may achieve financial autonomy

Continued from page 1

program budgets, don't understand the law school's priorities and schedules, Wilson said.

"Most other law schools have more autonomy in their budgeting and finance, (so) I thought it would be better to adopt a mold that other schools have adopted," Wilson said.

Wilson said he presented the idea to attendees of the SBA meeting on Thursday — the first of several meetings — and the responses were constructive.

Balderas said the SBA wants a thorough and transparent exploration of the proposal so law school group members can determine whether there is broad-based support. The exploration will be a year-long process, she said.

ASUO President Adam Walsh said he will examine the possibility of making such a change but said that it would take some time and would be a huge task.

"I'm still figuring out if it's even possible in the first place," Walsh said, adding that the necessary changes to the constitution would require broad support from the Student Senate, the University president and other concerned parties.

Student Senate President Stephanie Erickson said a similar idea was suggested last year, and law school programs were offended by the attempt to combine all the groups into one account.

"I don't think it's a very good idea. I don't think groups would be happy with that," Erickson said.

Ben Miller, treasurer of Land Air Water, the nation's oldest student-run environmental law society, said he is not supportive of the idea at all.

"It's conflictive and adds another level of bureaucracy" to the budgeting process, he said.

Contact the campus and federal politics reporter at nwilbur@dailyemerald.com

IN BRIEF

'Green' chemistry benefits environment, bottom line

PORTLAND — Remember the famous line from the classic movie, "The Graduate," when a helpful family friend whispers to a young Dustin Hoffman that there is one magic word of advice for the future

— "plastics"?

The leaders of a growing scientific revolution called "green chemistry" might rephrase the line to something more modern like, "biodegradable, renewable, nontoxic and environmentally friendly plastics."

They say the world can't afford the pollution and health risks associated with toxic industrial chemicals to make plastics, drugs, paper

and everyday items.

"For many people, chemistry is dangerous, scary stuff — I think they have a hard time seeing the future where we can do chemistry safely," said Ken Dooxsee, a University of Oregon chemist who is one of the leaders of the movement to educate the next generation of scientists and industrial researchers about green chemistry.

The concept has been embraced

by the American Chemical Society as one of the best ways to reduce pollution while cutting the huge cost of toxic waste disposal and cleanup, making it more profitable for industries to switch to safer chemicals.

"Chemists are getting very good at designing molecules," said Paul Anastas, director of the society's Green Chemical Institute.

"You can design them to be toxic

or nontoxic, hazardous or nonhazardous. What people didn't expect is that it was going to be more profitable," Anastas said.

The fiber, called Sorona, requires 40 percent less energy to manufacture than other synthetic fibers and helped DuPont win the presidential green chemistry award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2003.

—The Associated Press

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