

## Witt Will Not Run for House Re-Election

*Redistricting plan changes District 31 boundaries; Stout announces candidacy*

Oregon House District 31, which includes Vernonia, will look very different in the 2022 election cycle.

In late September the Oregon Legislature passed their congressional and legislative redistricting plans and chose to significantly change the boundaries of District 31, which has been represented by Democrat Brad Witt since he was appointed to the seat in 2005. The new legislative boundaries removed Clatskanie, Witt's hometown, from District 31 and added it to District 32, which includes Clatsop and Tillamook counties and is currently represented by freshman Republican Suzanne Weber. The redistricting plan also removed urban areas in Bethany and Hillsboro, which favored Witt in past elections, while adding more rural areas of Washington County to District 31. Witt was one of only two Democrats to vote against the redistricting plan that the legislature approved.

Following the approval of the new district boundaries, Witt, age 69, announced he would not seek re-election after holding the seat through eight elections.

Earlier this year Witt was at the center of a controversy in Salem when he was accused of sexual harassment by Republican colleague Vicki Breese Iverson. The House Conduct Committee found that Witt had violated workplace rules against sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment and he was removed from his three committee assignments.

On October 12 Columbia County resident Brian Stout announced he would once again seek the Republican nomination for District 31. Stout has twice run against Witt and failed to unseat him in 2018 and 2020, falling just 500 votes short in the last race. Stout said, "We did a ton of groundwork last time which I believe sets the stage for a decisive win in the 2022 election. I hear daily from local citizens and business leaders, and they are frustrated. Many feel that our rural communities have been marginalized by a disproportionate emphasis on urban policy. It's time to restore balance to our economy and take a stand for our rural communities."

## Senator Johnson Announces Independent Run for Governor

State Senator Betsy Johnson, a moderate Democrat who represents Oregon's North Coast District 16 which includes Vernonia, has announced she will run for Governor as an unaffiliated candidate.

Johnson announced her candidacy in an email to supporters on October 14. She is currently serving her fourth term in the Senate after being appointed to the seat while serving her third term in the Oregon House.

In announcing her independent run, Johnson said her loyalty was not to any political party, but instead, "only to the people of Oregon."

"...having to choose between another left-wing liberal promising more of the same or a right-wing Trump apologist – is no choice at all," Johnson wrote in her announcement. "Oregonians deserve better than the excesses and nonsense of the extreme left and radical right. Oregonians are ready to move to the middle where sensible solutions are found."

Johnson has been a champion of rural causes, and has not been afraid to vote against the policies of the majority Democrats in the legislature.

She currently serves as one of three Tri-



Chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, responsible for putting together the State of Oregon's budget for 2021-2023. She also serves as the Senate chair of the Joint Committee On Legislative Audits, and is a member of the Joint Committee On Information Management and Technology, the Legislature's Emergency Board, the Joint Committee On Legislative Policy and Research, and the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On

*continued on page 6*

## Local Districts Navigate Mandate Impacts

The Vernonia School District (VSD) and the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District (VRFPD) have avoided a major loss of personnel due to COVID-19 state imposed vaccine mandates which took effect October 18, 2021, for education and health care workers.

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller told the School Board at their regular October 14 meeting, that all but one staff member have either received the vaccination or have qualified for a valid medical or religious exception to the mandate; Miller said the District is working with the

final staff member to resolve their status.

On Tuesday, October 19 the VRFPD Board of Directors met for their monthly meeting, which was rescheduled from one week earlier in order to address any personnel and volunteer losses due to the vaccination mandates. The Board learned from Fire Chief Dean Smith that one volunteer has resigned, and three have taken a 90-day leave of absence, and the District now has 12 active volunteers. "We are 100 percent compliant," reported Smith, indicating all personnel have either received the vaccination or qualified for a medical or religious exception.

*inside*

## New CZ Trail Signage in Place

A project to install signage along the CZ (Crown Zellerbach) Trail has now been completed with two new trailheads in Vernonia added to the system.

The installation of signage at the new Holce Trailhead at the end of Knott Street was the final piece in the project that saw interpretive and street signs installed at all trailhead facilities, along with signage to the new Anderson

Park Trailhead parking area at the corner of Adams Avenue and Maple Street.

The Anderson Park Trailhead now officially links the CZ Trail with the Banks-Vernonia Trail, creating a 45 mile mixed use trail (paved, packed dirt, and gravel) for use by bicyclists, hikers, and equestrian riders.

*continued on page 9*



- 4 Letters: Remembering the Timbernook
- 8 Our Friend the Douglas-fir
- 10 VHS Fall Sports Report

