

The Long and Dusty Trail

Campaigning to make battered Oregon shine

When I started running for governor last January, I knew that a campaign would have to start early and run a long road to overtake the advantage of an incumbent whose campaign funding will result from catering to corporate wealth. I harbor no ill will, but I have issues with the governor and believe that an honest, principled, grass-roots campaign will motivate the vast numbers of individuals whose lives are not being served by special interest dominance. I urge Oregonians to amplify their power and stop to fight these unfair forces by joining the thousands of names on our email list who agree with my perspective on issues. We can be found at www.petesorenson.com



To run for governor, you've got to travel. With our crew of volunteer drivers, I have traveled the 308 miles of the I-5 corridor counties many times since January. I've logged many thousands of miles while talking and listening, presenting and learning. I've been from Newport to Ontario on U.S. 20; from Pacific time to Mountain time. I've recently traveled 1,300 miles to 10 cities in six days attending conferences, interviewing on radio and in newspapers; talking to community college presidents and personnel, teachers' groups and labor, Headstart directors and the leader of Oregon's Vietnam vets.

As Cary, Wayne and Brian (the main volunteer drivers so far) drive, I'm constantly on the phone planning, coordinating and revising scheduled stops. I've stood with Tillamook cheese workers on strike on Highway 101, spoken at a Latino political gathering in north Portland, and talked to the Oregon Small Business Coalition. Wayne from Springfield drove me on the odyssey that ended in Ontario where I talked with local farmers about issues involving an ethanol plant. The governor had flown in and

talked only to the people promoting and building the plant, and flew out. He had no time to deal with the people whose lives will be affected by the plant.

While on the road, I meet interesting people. I met with the owners, management and staff (one family) at Hampton Station. It's a small place, only on one side of the road on Highway 20 between Bend and Burns. It is so incredibly satisfying to talk to such a diversity of Oregonians – real working people – in this beautiful state. The memories of that will last, no matter where the politics end.

People ask all kinds of questions about the state. They ask what can we do about the war in Iraq, they ask whether cities and counties can control wildlife eating their gardens, they ask what the government can do to help improve the schools and health care, they ask about gangs and illegal drugs and they ask about jobs and the environment. In general, I find they ask what we can do to make things better for more people.

One of the stories I tell is that Jennifer, my daughter, is working as a grocery clerk to help pay her way through LCC. I pointed out that Jennifer paid more in Oregon income taxes than two-thirds of the big corporations doing business in our state. In 1973, when I was a student at the UO, those same corporations paid 18 percent of the total share of state taxes. Today they pay 5 percent of the total. One of the things suffering most from that revenue loss is the very educational institutions that provide the corporations with the skilled people they need.

We need to develop a fairer tax system and big corporations need to carry a fair share. It may not have to be 18 percent, but 5 percent is unconscionable in the face of our faltering institutions. The excuse for cutting corporate taxes is to attract new business. Oregon is now dead last, offering the lowest corporate taxes of all the 50 states. In our state, the last big businesses we attracted were Sony and Enron. Sony packed up and left despite low taxes, and the governor vetoed an effort to make bankrupt Enron a public utility answerable to the people.

I want Oregon to have only the best in statecraft and leadership. I would truly appreciate the opportunity to serve her. I ask you to join me at www.petesorenson.com Let's make Oregon shine, not take a shiner!

Peter Sorenson was a practicing lawyer in Eugene and a state senator. He's currently in his third term as a Lane County commissioner and is a Democratic candidate for governor.

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