



Pat Riggs-Henson goes door to door

PAT VS. SID

Job-maker takes on jobless conservative in nonpartisan county race

STORY BY ALAN PITTMAN • PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

A woman who's spent the last three decades helping thousands of people find jobs is running door to door for county commissioner against the unemployed Republican mayor of Springfield and the timber, gravel and development barons who back him.

Pat Riggs-Henson, a Democrat in this nonpartisan race, says she's knocked on more than 11,000 doors in the district that includes Springfield and northeast Eugene. "If the doorsteps are any indication, I think its going to be close," she said of the thousands of people she's talked to. Riggs-Henson retired after 29 years with the Lane Workforce Partnership helping thousands of people find jobs and said she often counsels the many unemployed people she meets while canvassing. "I've helped people get jobs while I'm walking. I'm having a ball."

Her opponent Sid Leiken, a college drop-out, was twice elected mayor of Springfield after running unopposed for the unpaid, largely ceremonial job. Leiken told *The Register-Guard* in March he was unemployed after dropping out of a race for Congress. Leiken abandoned his race against Peter DeFazio for a run at the \$73,000 commissioner job after the state found that he was guilty of taking campaign cash for his own personal use. Leiken did not return calls requesting comment.

Riggs-Henson has raised \$114,000 for her campaign, with large contributions from a variety of local labor unions and the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. She served for 25 years as the chief financial officer for the Lane County Central Labor Council and 14 years on the Lane Community College Board.



Sid Leiken

Leiken has raised \$68,000 with large contributions from timber barons, freeway construction companies, gravel pit companies, developers and land speculators. The County Commission influences federal timber policy and votes on new freeways, gravel pits and plans to rezone areas — decisions that can dramatically increase land values for developers and speculators.

Riggs-Henson said she would seek to balance the need for jobs with the need to protect the environment in making land use decisions that affect gravel pits, developers and speculators. "I want to be able to walk in the woods and fish in the rivers. It has to be in balance," she said.

Leiken has said he has worked as a consultant for developers in the past with his firm SWL Consulting. But many developers are struggling to stay afloat now in the housing collapse, and SWL now appears officially defunct.

According to state records, SWL was dissolved last year after Leiken failed to pay a \$100 business name renewal fee for the consulting firm that lists his home address. The state requires people doing business in Oregon to register their business names. According to the state, doing business and entering into contracts and opening bank accounts without a registered name can be difficult.

Leiken's wife, who worked as a manager with Liberty Bank (which went insolvent this year, got a federal bailout and was taken over by another bank), wrote a \$2,000 check to compensate Leiken's campaign for campaign cash that state regulators found Leiken had illegally taken for his own personal use.