

»» ENDORSEMENTS ««

SLANT

Ballots arrived in Lane County mailboxes this week for the May 19 special elections. If you didn't get your ballot, call Lane County Elections at 682-4234 or visit lanecounty.org/elections. Completed ballots

need to be at the elections office or in white ballot boxes around town and campus by 8 pm Tuesday, May 19.

Below are our endorsements in selected races and money measures. Find additional information in your Voters' Pamphlet.

LANE ESD DIRECTOR POSITION 7 (AT LARGE)

— Linda Hamilton

Linda Hamilton has a decades-long history of service in government, public service agencies and boards, and she would be a welcome addition to ESD. She has served on the Eugene Human Rights Commission and Human Services Commission, the Lane County Advisory Council for Disability Services, the UO President's Diversity Advisory Community Committee and many others.

One opponent is John A. Baumann, a physician with a long background in public health services and policy and early childhood development. Another opponent is Karen Bodner, a landscaper and Tea Party conservative who ran unsuccessfully against Chris Edwards for state Senate in 2010.

EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J POSITION 4

— Eileen Nittler

It's not hard to choose among social worker Eileen Nittler, retired doctor John A. Baumann (who withdrew his candidacy last week) and retired small-business owner Scott Landgreen. Nittler already has a stellar record of school service in 4J, including the 4J Equity Committee, committees to renew three 4J school levies and extensive volunteer work. We're impressed by her straightforward approach to education as well as her commitment to transparency. We believe her energy and talent for open communication will serve her well on the school board.

EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J POSITION 5

— Jim Torrey

We've lambasted Jim Torrey in the past when he was mayor of Eugene and rubbed us the wrong way on many issues, but he has always joined progressives in supporting public education, even to the point of raising local taxes — a very un-Republican thing to do. His unwavering support for the kids of Eugene can't be questioned. We don't have the facts to know Torrey's role in the secrecy and mis-managed firing of Superintendent Sheldon Berman, but we suspect that other board members not on the ballot were more important players. Torrey is a strong advocate for increased school funding and has the ear of lawmakers to make it happen. He's respected by conservatives and business in Eugene, an important segment to bring about better budgets.

We like Kevin Cronin and his vision for reforming our funding system for Oregon schools, but he's such a political animal that his candidacy for School Board seems misdirected. His talents and

exceptional energy should go to a statewide campaign to reform Oregon's tax structure.

The third candidate in this race is David Nickles, a self-described "fringe" candidate who has libertarian leanings. Nickles is an impressive thinker and speaker. He voiced concerns in the debate last week that the system that failed him will also fail his young son.

EUGENE SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J POSITION 7

— Mary Walston

Frustration with public education on so many levels is driving a "throw them all out" shout in these school board elections, but we all know the niggling problem is the replacement. First, we don't really know Mary Walston's role in recent issues of Superintendent Sheldon Berman, his non-evaluation and firing. We do know that she has strong endorsements in the Voters' Pamphlet, she has spent countless hours as a volunteer in the schools, and she knows how local and state government works. It's a plus that she works for Val Hoyle, now one of the most powerful members of the Oregon Legislature.

Her opponent, Colin Farnsworth, has made a big deal of his being blocked from debating Walston. That's not an issue. A substitute teacher in this area for four years, he also stresses the importance of having a teacher on the board. If elected, he would not be able to teach in 4J and serve on the board because of the conflicts of interest in negotiating teacher contracts. Every candidate wants more funding for public education in Oregon. We hope Farnsworth will invest his energy in fighting for the statewide solution we so desperately need.

LANE COUNTY MEASURE 20-231

— Vehicle Registration Fee — YES

We still believe in representative government and taxes and public process and compromise and safe rural roads and city streets and bridges. We don't like flat taxes, but this compromise should be supported. The county's citizen road advisory committee evaluated 20 funding options before recommending this fee to the County Commission, and while the fee is not ideal, it's simple and easy to collect. Any sales tax or fee based on income or mileage would require a big overhead to manage. The state of Oregon already regulates weight-mile fees on big trucks and commercial vehicles, and local governments cannot legally add to those fees. Voters have shown little interest in adding to property taxes. It's important to note that the fee will go to maintenance, not to building new roads and creating sprawl.

• **May special elections** tend to have low turnouts, meaning everyone who does vote has a bigger impact than in general elections. Your ballot has superpowers! Lane County's Vehicle Registration Fee may have trouble passing this time around, but it has people thinking about how we pay (or don't pay) for street, road and bridge maintenance, not only in the county but also in our cities and small towns. Is there any town in Lane County not struggling to fund street repairs? Regardless, credit should go to the citizen Road Advisory Committee that wrestled with 20 different options for raising money for pavement repair. The RAC has a long and practical view and understands that it costs 10 to 12 times as much to rebuild a road as to repair it. And we saw an unusual compromise and consensus on the Lane County Commission, which voted unanimously to send this proposal to the voters.

• And as we go to press this week we note that Alicia Hays, the incumbent 4J School Board member in Position 1, has a last-minute opponent, sort of. **Lisa Christon** is running a write-in campaign and says on her Facebook page, "I am greatly troubled by recent developments and would truly welcome an opportunity to be part of the solution." Too late an entry for this election, but we hope she runs again.

• As Baltimore reels from the death of Freddie Gray in police hands, here in Eugene **Brian Babb's** friends, family and community are devastated by the death of the veteran with PTSD and a traumatic brain injury. The Eugene police responded with a SWAT team to a call for help by Babb's therapist, Becky Higgins. Higgins' emotional and thought-provoking viewpoint in the April 29 *R-G* is worth a read.

At a May 4, press conference, not long after DA Alex Gardner found the shooting justified under the law, Babb's family laid out a plan for "Brian's Bill" as part of an effort to ensure other veterans don't meet the same fate. They are planning a march on May 12, the day Babb would have turned 50, at 11:30 am at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza at the corner of 8th and Oak.

EPD has since reached out to veterans, but there are still questions about the incident — Babb's family says the neighbors' accounts of the incident don't line up with the police report.

The heartwrenching press conference and other footage documented by videographer Tim Lewis of PictureEugene, can be watched on YouTube under the title "Those Dark Places." Babb's sister, Ronda McGowan, says she was the one who found the bullet that killed her brother in the wall of the house, not the police who searched the scene and left Babb's body lying there for six hours.

• Just when we're bragging to our Portland friends about how much better our daily newspaper is than theirs, the game changes. Tony Baker, editor and publisher of **The Register-Guard**, announced May 5 that for the first time in 88 years a Baker will not be running the Eugene daily. We regret that. H. Christian Anderson III will be the new editor, publisher and president of the Guard Publishing Co., which owns the paper, as of June 1. As the publisher of *The Oregonian*, Anderson has overseen the shrinking and shallowing of the print version of Oregon's venerable daily, at the same time expanding electronic platforms. Because the Baker family will retain ownership, we're hopeful that their long attachment to this rowdy community will persist. What does this change mean for *EW*, in our 34th year and circulating more than 43,000 papers a week? We'll soon see.

• We've seen the **environmental damage** done by homeless campers along the Willamette River in Eugene and share EWEB Commissioner John Brown's desire to do something about it (see our story this week). Brown, the Rev. Wayne Martin, Terry McDonald, Pastor Dan Bryant and other community leaders are looking for practical solutions, particularly in light of the city spending \$250,000 last year to clean up homeless camps. We can do better. The "ambassadors" bike patrols announced this week might be part of the solution, and the "Hobbit huts" should not be rejected without being explored. Both proposals need to take into account not only how best to help the parks and environment, but also how to help the unhoused and not create a scenario where we push people further and further to the edges or create a law enforcement vs. homeless mentality. So what more can the city do to provide low-income and no-income housing?