

Special Election?

NOT IF BALLOT MEASURE 101 FAILS ...

By the time you read this column, you will likely know the outcome of Ballot Measure 101. I don't know the result as I write this column. I'm hoping for the best. Voter turnout for this special election is disturbingly, historically low, never a good sign for the "yes" side.

If Measure 101 fails, the central question before Oregon's 2018 legislative session, which begins Feb. 5, will be to "repeal and replace" health insurance coverage for 400,000 of our poorest Oregonians. That includes 100,000 poor kids who, like the DACA Dreamers, did not ask to be placed in this situation.

Including the matching federal dollars that will disappear if 101 fails, the Legislature will face a \$1 billion dollar hole in the current biennial budget. That ain't chump change. And that's not to mention the additional \$1 trillion in federal revenue cuts anticipated in the next 10 years as a result of Greg "Trumper" Walden's tax giveaway to corporations and the wealthy. Chump change my ass!

Assuming Measure 101 is successful, the Legislature will focus its attention on other matters during the upcoming short 35-day session. Whether 101 passes or fails, the Legislature will still have to look at the impact of Walden's future federal deficit giveaway on Oregon's budget over the next 10 years. Climate change legislation and PERS and its unfunded actuarial liability will certainly be discussed. And now that Trump and Walden have declared war on net neutrality, Oregon and other states are trying to come up with a strategy to maintain it.

Speaker Tina Kotek has already indicated she will pursue a clean energy jobs bill as a priority. House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson has announced she will incorporate net neutrality into her internet privacy bill. And Sen. Floyd Prozanski is interested in better consumer protections based on the highly publicized Equifax data breach last year along with his annual marijuana policy tweaks. He should have a red baseball cap that reads "Make America Hemp Again!"

The Oregon Senate has a different minority leader now, Jackie Winters, so it will be difficult to predict how she and President Courtney will bargain the heavy political differences between their caucuses. And all this with a gubernatorial primary election looming three months later in May, which already has seven Republicans and a Democrat filed for the office. Two of them, Gov. Kate Brown and Bend Rep. Knute Buehler, will be sparring throughout the Salem session.

Not much is expected in terms of substantive public policy from the short session; it should be more about revenue and adjustments to the recent changes in federal tax policy. That's what was intended by the folks who favored changing Oregon's Constitution to provide for yearly rather than biennial sessions, because two-year revenue cycles cause faulty predictions by even the smartest state economists even when they dress up in black robes and pointy magician caps.

With all that uncertainty in mind, let's focus today on some of the upcoming races in Oregon's May 15 primary election.

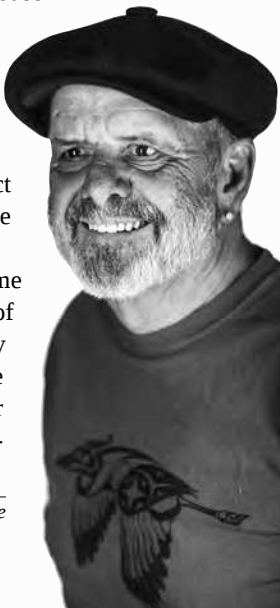
Here in Lane County, there will be at least one open seat in the Oregon House with Phil's Barnhart's announced retirement in District 11. That's a big pair of shoes to fill. The 18-year House veteran and hardworking chair of the House Revenue Committee for the past 11 years was a passionate advocate for shifting Oregon's nation-leading dependence on personal income tax to fund our state budget. One Democrat candidate, Marty Wilde, has filed already for Phil's seat and several other Democrats and Republicans are expected to file before the March 6 filing deadline.

Candidates in their first or second race are electorally most at risk.

Rep. Julie Fahey had a fabulous rookie 2017 session for House District 14 and has already drawn a Republican opponent, Rich Cunningham. Rich is a former Democrat whose name familiarity is negative due to his unsubstantiated assertion a few years back that he'd been elected to the Rhode Island legislature. Another quality rookie, the recently appointed Senator James Manning in Senate District 7 has not drawn a Republican opponent ... yet. Neither have Prozanski and Reps. Nancy Nathanson and Paul Holvey.

The most important race in the primary election for me is the non-partisan county commission seat. In my neck of the woods, Heather Buch has stepped up to challenge Gary Williams, who was recently appointed to replace Faye Stewart. Heather is a small business owner, she fits our east Lane profile and she's a thoughtful advocate for low-income housing solutions. More on this to follow.

Former state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a retired state employee.



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Jan 25

David
Grisman
Quintet



The Emerald City
Jazz Kings

Thu & Sun, Feb 1 & 4

A Pocketful
of Dreams

Bing Crosby & The Classic Songbook



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Sat, Feb 3

Corky Siegel's
Chamber Blues

Corky Siegel
Workshop
1-3 pm
Saturday



Chick
Corea
Trio

Tue, Feb 6

2 shows
7:00 & 9:15

