

# The 'Year of the Woman' — or is it?

PROGRESSIVES CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT UNTIL NOVEMBER

**W**e have been hearing from every corner nationally and here in Oregon about a “blue wave” coming this fall led by Democratic women in response to the Trump-Pence-McConnell-Ryan plutocracy. But what about May?

My question is, if we are so focused on partisan races in November, are we overlooking two of the most important primary *non-partisan* races happening in our state and Lane County? We can test that theory by watching the turnout and results locally in support of Heather Buch for East Lane County commissioner and Val Hoyle’s run for statewide election as commissioner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI).

How will Republican moneyed interests play against Democrats in these races? In both cases, these *non-partisan* races involve progressive Democratic women running against well-financed Republican men. Speaking on behalf of us irrelevant white rural geezers everywhere, we have reason to worry.

Buch’s main opponent in the East Lane commission race is Gary Williams, the only conservative in that race. We currently have five white guys in their 60s on the Lane County Commission. As an old guy in his 60s, I can tell you that we need a different perspective at the table.

We have the opportunity next week to elect a qualified woman who not only brings a different perspective but has expertise in addressing two of the most critical issues facing the county right now: affordable housing solutions in both urban and rural areas and addressing income inequality. Buch has earned more endorsements than any other candidate in the race, including Peter DeFazio. Hell, *The Register-Guard* and the *Eugene Weekly* both endorsed Buch. I can’t remember the last time the R-G supported the progressive candidate in that race.

Four other so-called progressive males are also in the race, including Kevin Matthews, who alienated some of the most progressive voters in the district by leading a lawsuit to stop the Sponsors Inc. post-prison supported housing project in the Acorn Park neighborhood. The other three candidates are Tim Laue, James Barber and (another) professional comedian. Unfortunately, any of these four could cut into our chances to elect Buch and prevent Williams from getting 51 percent of the primary votes and winning outright.

Remember, Trump won the East Lane County district by just under 200 votes, and only 37 percent of the voters are Democrats. Will we get behind a qualified woman with strong connections throughout the district in May or risk Gary Williams getting 51 percent and winning outright?

Val Hoyle faces a much different and more daunting task to get to 51 percent in her three-way BOLI race. As I warned you in my last column, Republican House member Julie Parrish and her aggressive and nasty campaign management company have put out a disgusting hit piece on Hoyle. Lou Ogden is Hoyle’s opponent and is using Parrish as his consultant. Ogden’s the guy that loves right-to-work laws, thinks BOLI should be “more flexible in enforcing the minimum wage” and hates unions.

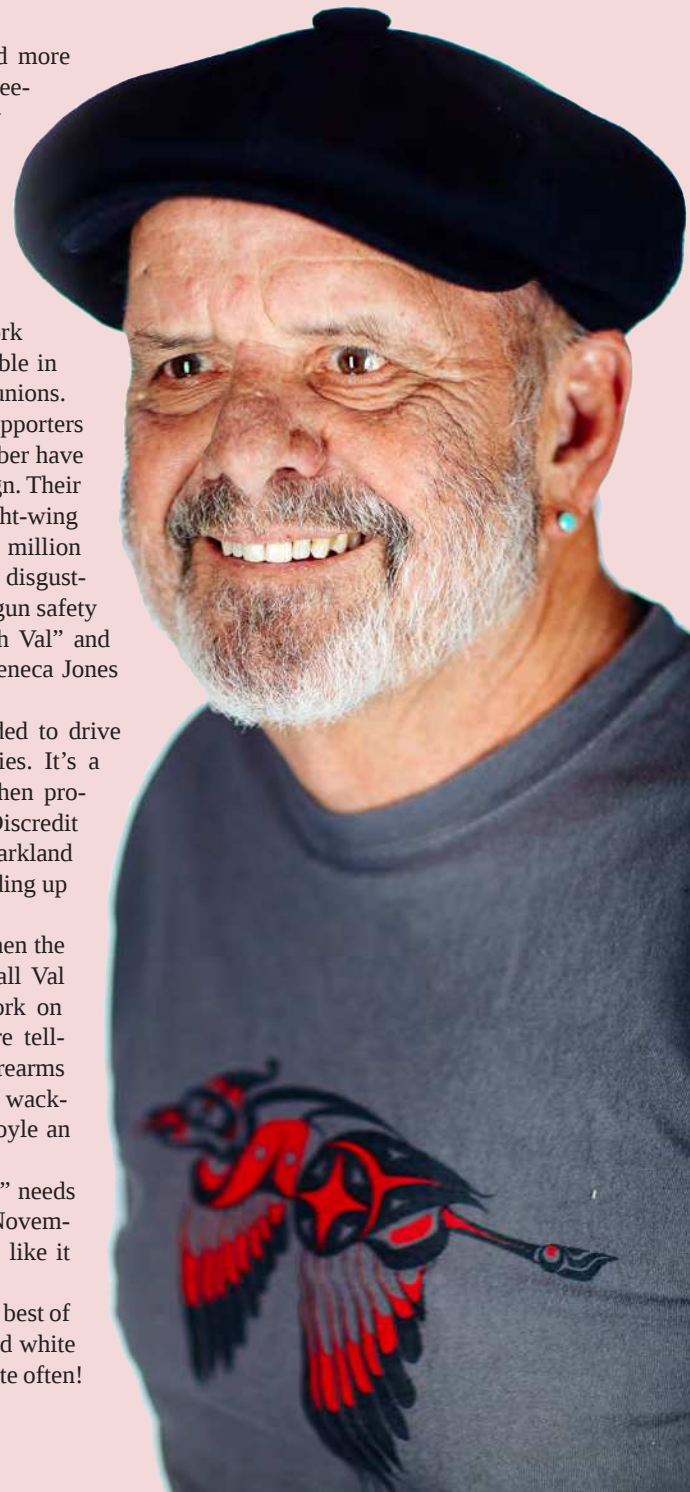
In politics, you’re known by the supporters you attract. Seneca Jones and Freres Lumber have each given Ogden \$50,000 for his campaign. Their contributions along with many other right-wing groups have added up to a quarter of a million dollars over the last few weeks to pay for disgusting ads using dead children to discredit a gun safety champion. I still remember the “Impeach Val” and “Impeach Floyd” signs hanging on the Seneca Jones mill fence on Highway 99.

The attack ad on Val Hoyle is intended to drive down Democratic turnout in the primaries. It’s a smart move in a low-turnout election when progressives are focused on November: Discredit Hoyle in a false ad attaching her to the Parkland shootings and lying about her record standing up for universal background checks.

Here in Lane County we remember when the Oregon Firearms Federation tried to recall Val Hoyle and Floyd Prozanski for their work on passing background checks. What’s more telling is Hoyle’s ratings with the Oregon Firearms Federation — an even more extreme gun wack-job element than the NRA. They gave Hoyle an F- score, and Ogden got a B+.

The bottom line is that the “blue wave” needs to start now. We can’t afford to wait till November to pay attention. Vote before May 15 like it matters. Because it does.

I wish Heather Buch and Val Hoyle the best of luck with all the confidence of a concerned white rural geezer. Remember: Vote early and vote often!



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