

Trump Hunter

OREGON'S AG ISN'T AFRAID TO TAKE TRUMP TO COURT

By Henry Houston



Back when President Donald Trump was something of a businessman, he was no stranger to the courtroom. A 2016 *USA Today* analysis found that Trump had been involved in 3,500 legal actions. As president, he's still finding himself the center of legal cases.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum is one of many attorneys general from Democrat-led U.S. states who are squaring up to the Trump administration's policies.

Rosenblum and her office have filed 104 environmental actions, including lawsuits and other legal filings, and is leading the charge against the Trump administration's attempt to cut Title X federal grant money from medical organizations that offer patients information about abortion services.

Rosenblum tells *Eugene Weekly* that she hopes mobilizing the Oregon Department of Justice "helps protect Oregonians and Oregon — as in our beautiful state — from the harm caused by the actions of the Trump administration."

Because of limited resources, the state rarely initiates lawsuits, she says. But Oregon is on the front lines suing the Trump administration over a Title X rule that prohibits health care professionals from counseling, referring or providing any information about abortion services — even if patients request the information.

Twenty Democrat-led states joined Oregon in the case, with other cases filed in California and Washington state. She says having a state like New York join as a co-lead is a way to share the cost associated with a legal case.

The American Medical Association and Planned Parenthood also filed a companion case. Rosenblum says she took on the case because Oregon is the only state without restrictions on women's reproductive freedoms.

"We want to be in the lead to demonstrate our strong positions for these freedoms," she adds.

Another reason Rosenblum wanted Oregon to take the lead is because filing in Oregon would mean a home-field advantage in the case.

In U.S. District Court in Eugene, Judge Michael McShane blocked the Trump administration rule in April. Since the policy requires referral for prenatal care, "the provider is mandated to refuse to provide the referral the client wants, and instead provide a referral the client neither needs nor requested," McShane wrote, adding that the rule is something out of a Franz Kafka novel.

On June 20, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals granted a stay on the Title X changes. The court said it would rehear and reconsider the policy the week of Sept. 23.

In the meantime, Planned Parenthood announced its withdrawal from the Title X program Aug. 19. The reproductive rights nonprofit received 40 percent of the federal grant program's money.

Rosenblum says she's still hopeful about the hearing in September.

When asked how the case might fare before the conservative-leaning Supreme Court, she says she doesn't know whether the case would be heard. If it were, though, she says the Supreme Court might support Oregon's case.

"A big part of this case has to do with medical ethics and the ethical obligations of doctors and medical

professionals to serve their patients so they provide all options," Rosenblum says. "To have a rule that limits that, that restricts that, that actually tells doctors they aren't allowed to discuss certain things with their patients? That's not acceptable, and I don't think there's a single justice who thinks it is."

Oregon has taken on the Trump administration on several other policy decisions. Policies that Oregon has joined other states to challenge include withholding federal grants if the state doesn't cooperate with immigration authorities, denying green cards to immigrants who receive public assistance and using a declaration of emergency to fund a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

"One of the things we've been really successful at doing is slowing things down," she says. "We're getting down to the wire. There's just one more year — hopefully — of the Trump administration."

She says Oregon is a part of almost every case that California or Washington state initiates because West Coast states have mutual interests when challenging Trump's policies.

When deciding which lawsuit to join or which legal filing to submit, Rosenblum says she does reach out to Gov. Kate Brown and other state agencies to ensure she's acting responsibly.

But, she adds, her office hasn't stopped doing day-to-day issues. The Trump challenges are just an additional caseload, and Rosenblum says her office can't take the lead on many challenges without hiring more staff.

During the Obama administration, Oregon didn't challenge his policies as much as Trump's, but Rosenblum doesn't see her challenges as playing politics in the courtroom.

"Every case that we look at, we look at whether Oregonians are being harmed or whether the environment is being harmed," she says. "If you want to call that politics, go ahead, but I don't."

The issues might have policy implications, she adds, but that's not politics either.

It sounds like Oregon and other Democrat-led states have taken up the conservative's rallying cry of states' rights, but Rosenblum says that's not a concept reserved to just one U.S. political wing.

"It turns out states' rights isn't a blue/red thing at all," she says. "It's about protecting our own state. When the federal government infringes upon that, we're all there." ■

slant

• Mass shootings, hate rallies, wildfires, climate change, politics in general. Sometimes it feels like bad news fills up our pages. *Eugene Weekly* has a policy of always trying to make sure we have something bright and fun in our issues as well, whether it's longtime stalwart Happening People, a new business or everybody's favorite, the crossword puzzle. This week we decided to devote our cover feature spot to fun, so **welcome to EW's Puzzle Issue!** Solve the puzzles and then take a photo and tag us with #EWPuzzled on social media.

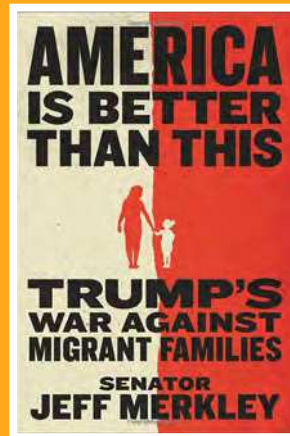
• **Portland (and Oregon as a whole, most likely) really pisses off the alt right.** This state is really white, due to a long history of oppression against African Americans, but it's also very liberal. It's Portlandia, and Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer know their rallies

will get a lot of headline-grabbing kickback (literally and figuratively) from Antifa. (Brief note to President Donald Trump here: Antifa means anti-fascist, and while Trump would probably love to declare every anti-fascist a terrorist, that's not going to fly). The last Aug. 17 rally in Portland was met with strong resistance from those who oppose hate and white supremacy. Check out our coverage and photos online.

• **Rep. Peter DeFazio has defeated Republican Art Robinson** in every election since 2010, but now there's a new Republican lining up for the challenge to take on DeFazio. Alek Skarlatos of Roseburg has filed for the 4th Congressional District in 2020. This is in addition to Jo Rae Perkins who lost to Robinson in 2016 and 2018 in the primaries. Skarlatos helped thwart a terror attack on a train in France, and he later played himself in the Clint Eastwood movie about the incident. With Robinson's efforts to collect the pee

of all Oregonians and his belief that a little nuclear contamination is good for you, it's made the race against DeFazio pretty interesting over the years. What's Skarlatos got?

• **Remember Jamie McLeod-Skinner?** She ran a strong but unsuccessful campaign against Greg Walden in 2018 for his eastern Oregon congressional seat. Now *The Oregonian* and *Bend Bulletin* both report that she is planning to run in 2020 for Oregon secretary of state. Filing date is mid-September for the May primary, sure to include other strong Democrats. She's a planner, attorney and consultant in water issues and national resources. McLeod-Skinner could be a bridge between that rural-urban divide that the Oregon media keeps talking about.



• **What we're reading:** Here's a new book with political reach both now and into the future. It's *America Is Better Than This* by Sen. Jeff Merkley, just out this month. Merkley is talking about his book 7:30 pm Aug. 26 at Powell's Books in Portland. He writes about the inside story of how one senator with no background as an immigration activist

became a leading advocate for reform of the brutal policies that have created a humanitarian crisis on the southern U.S. border. The book also could be another stepping stone on Merkley's reach for the presidency, not in 2020 but later. If you're going to run for president, you have to write a book and this sounds like a good one.