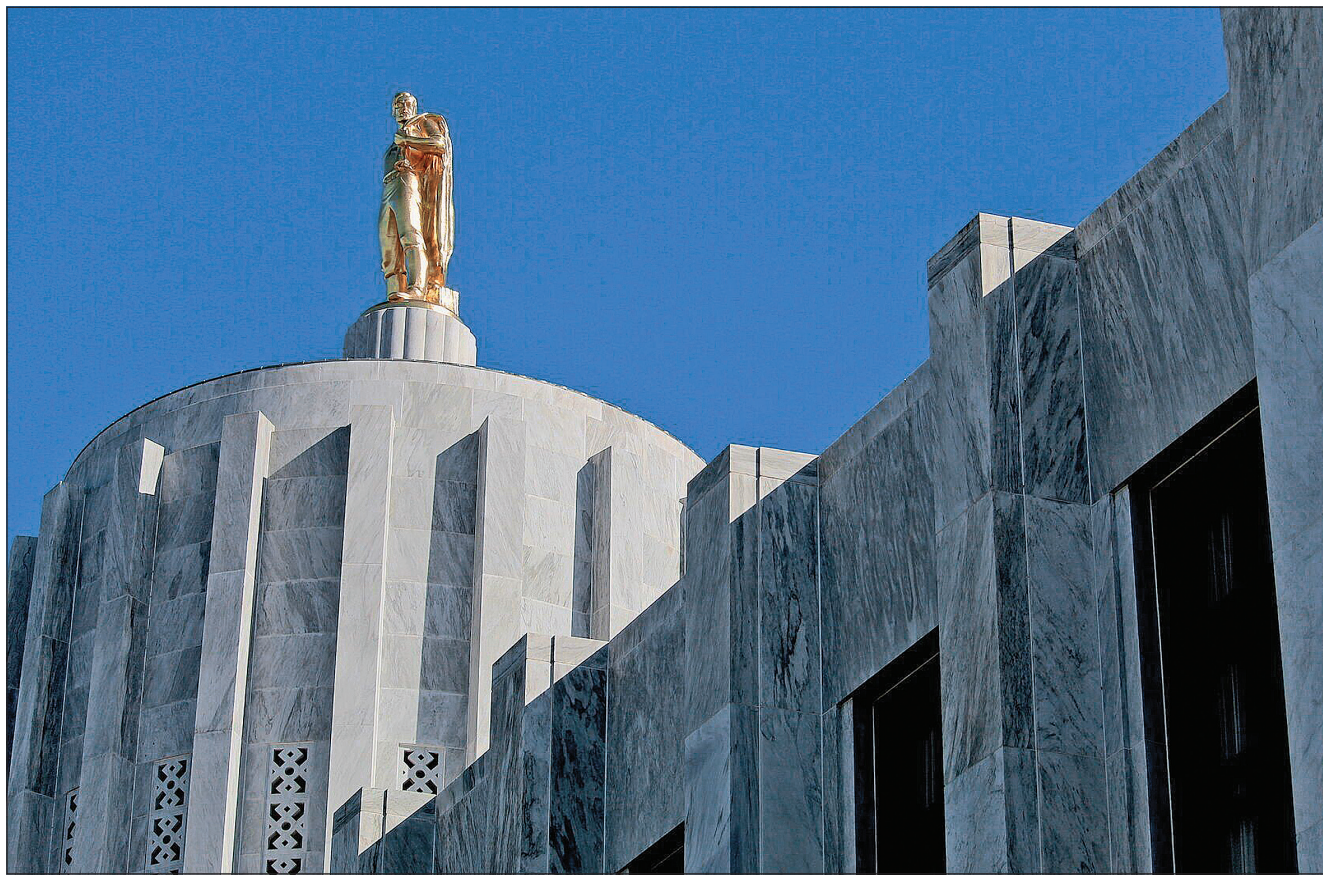


Redistricting roils legislative races east of Cascades

BY GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau
In Oregon politics, the Cascades have served as a political firewall for the past decade.
Democrats and Republicans running for the Oregon Legislature would slug it out in the Portland suburbs, along the coast, spots in the Willamette Valley, and the timberlands of the southwest.
But east of the mountains was rock-solid red Republican.
Any state lawmaker from The Dalles, Bend and Klamath Falls and east more than 250 miles to Hermiston, Pendleton, the Wallows, Baker City, La Grande, and Ontario, was sure to have an "R" for Republican party designation in Salem. It was possible to drive nine hours from Hells Canyon in the far northeast to Klamath Lake in the far southwest and never pass through a Democratic district.
Until 2020.



The Oregon state capitol building in Salem, Oregon

Tim Gruver / The Center Square

"Our base is fired up and we are eager to take our message to voters in November."

— Oliver Muggli, executive director of the Senate Democratic Leadership Fund

"It is 2022 and we have the worst governor in America, and Oregonians who really aren't happy with the direction the state is going."

— Bryan Iverson, Prineville political consultant for Republican races for the Legislature

Now, halfway along that route, soon after turning left from U.S. Highway 26 onto U.S. Highway 97 is House District 54 in Bend, represented for the past two years by Democrat Jason Kropf. His election ended Democrats' frustration at a decade of losses to a string of moderate Republicans — Jason Conger, Knute Buehler, and Cheri Helt.

Minority Leader Vikki Breese-Iverson, R-Prineville.
Both Democrats and Republicans, along with much of the media, have used Dave's Redistricting, a deeply detailed breakdown of political districts across the nation, to estimate odds in the new districts. The non-partisan website takes a cross-section of records to estimate partisan strength. The result is a rating of which party is favored, D for Democrat or R for Republican, and a percentage partisan tilt.

District 53, where Rep. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, is the incumbent. Nicknamed "the doughnut district" to describe how it wrapped around Bend, it took in Redmond, part of north Bend, and swung around to pull in Sunriver and La Pine.

Population growth put the old district well over the maximum for each House seat. Mapmakers cleaved off the southern portion. What's left is a district that's gone from R+6 to D+4. Zika announced last November that he wouldn't seek another term.

In a sign of how redistricting has stretched the acreage of rural districts, Brothers in Deschutes County will be one of the towns in House District 60, which covers six counties in two time zones. Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, is running for re-election. No Democrat filed for the race in the overwhelming GOP stronghold.

Democrats are looking to hold or expand the 2020 election results that gave them a 37-22 edge in the House and an 18-12 advantage in the Senate.

Redistricting and new calculations have both parties scanning the map for seats to flip or double down to hold. Most of the swing districts are west of the Cascades, with the Salem area, Portland suburbs, the far northwest and Ashland area receiving party leaders' attention.

Bend attorney Emerson Levy is the Democratic nominee. She gave Zika a close race in 2020 and now competes in a district with a much better shot of going for a Democrat.

Redistricting also lopped off much of the former district of Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles. To stay in the House, he would have had to challenge Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppler, the longest-serving member of the House.

The full political reckoning in the Central Oregon area won't be known until 2024, when the Senate District 27 seat of Senate Minority Leader Tim Knopp, R-Bend, will be up for election. Knopp won a tight race in 2020 against Democrat Eileen Kiely of Sunriver.

"Our base is fired up and we are eager to take our message to voters in November," said Oliver Muggli, executive director of the Senate Democratic Leadership Fund.

But after becoming a new battleground in 2020, Democrats are hoping to keep a toehold in the Bend area and expand outward along with the ongoing population growth.

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Despite redistricting, senators like Knopp whose terms aren't up for another two years retain their seats until 2024. But any bid for re-election would be in a more Democratic-tilted district centered around Bend and Redmond.

Republicans want to at the very least deny Democrats their current three-fifths supermajorities that allow the party to pass taxes and other financial bills without any Republican votes.

Rebalancing districts would mean populous areas having more seats covering less area. Rural areas would have fewer seats covering larger areas. House District 54 still covers most of Bend and has a D+24 partisan edge. Kropf is seeking re-election and will face Republican Judy Trego.
Just to the north is House

Beyond the immediate Bend area, the stretching and swerving of lines for less populated areas created sometimes troubling musical chairs for GOP lawmakers.

But redistricting pushed her district north and west, to include all of Crook County, parts of Jefferson County and the northernmost chunk of Deschutes County. Lawrence Jones, a retired state worker from Alaska who now lives in Prineville and is a substitute teacher in local schools, is the Democratic nominee.

The marquee race in November will certainly be among a trio of major candidates for governor: Democrat Tina Kotek, Republican Christine Drazan, and Betsy Johnson, who is running without party affiliation.
But it will be the race for the legislature that will determine the mix of lawmakers they will be dealing with for the next two years.
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Obituaries

Mary Louise Bliven (nee Delger)

March 15, 1944 — May 13, 2022

Born March 15, 1944, in Fort Worth, Texas, Mary moved to St. Paul, Minnesota in early childhood and graduated from St. Paul Murray High School in 1962. She attended the University of Idaho, graduating in 1966 with a bachelor's degree in Art. It was there that she met her first husband, Jerry Bliven. They moved to Redmond, where Jerry taught at Redmond Junior High School, and Mary taught Art for 25 years at Redmond High School.



Bliven

After Jerry's passing in 1983, Mary married Chancy Ball in 1986. Chancy also taught in the Redmond School District and coached wrestling for many years. After retirement, they enjoyed traveling the United States and to many places around the world. Mary loved her historic Redmond home, the yard in the summer, and her time with friends and family.

Mary was an accomplished watercolor artist. She was a past President of the Watercolor Society of Oregon, the Juniper Literary Club and the Central Oregon Retired Educators. She was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity.

Mary is survived by her husband, Chancy Ball, of Oro Valley, Arizona; son, Max Bliven, of Redmond; daughter, Sara Califf (Mathias) of Camas, Washington; four grandchildren; sister, Anne Hilton (Robert) of Tucson, Arizona; sister Jane Delger (Jens) of Apen, Germany. Mary was preceded in death by her parents, Josephine and Arnold Delger, and her first husband Jerry Bliven.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts to the University of Minnesota School of Pharmacy — Arnold D Delger Fund for Pharmacy Student Leadership — Fund #2315 are suggested.

Richard Kuehn, M.D.

Richard Kuehn of Redmond, formerly Corvallis and Northern Iowa, recently passed away.

Services: Memorial service for Richard Kuehn will be held Sat., June 25, at 11 a.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Redmond, Oregon.



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

A large group rallies during March for Our Lives, a gun violence protest in Bend Saturday.

March

Continued from A1
"You can still have the second amendment, a person can still protect themselves and protect their home, they don't need an automatic weapon to do it," Miller said. "You don't hunt with an automatic weapon."
Miller said she believes there are a lot of gun owners who see the importance of gun reform.
"I do think there are a lot of gun owners now that are starting to look at this and starting to say 'there is a compromise that we can make, that needs to be made and we need to hold our lawmakers accountable,'" she added.
Hayden Kasal-Barsky, who graduated from Bend High School last year and is now attending the University of Hawaii at Manoa on Oahu, is pursuing a degree in teaching

special education. She is back in Bend visiting her family and decided to come to the protest on Saturday to stand in solidarity with victims of gun violence.
"I'm really sick and tired of being a 19 year old, a young person, and just standing around while other people are getting murdered and politicians are calling it a mental health crisis instead of a gun issue," Kasal-Barsky said.
Kasal-Barsky said recent mass shootings have made her a little uneasy when it comes to going back to school in the fall and she called on the community to stand with students.
"I am even more scared to go back to school," she added. "Anyone can get shot at any moment, so just stand with us."
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