ELECTION'16 | ATTORNEY GENERAL

Rosenblum is clear choice for attorney general

Of all the statewide, cabinet-level positions being contested in November, voters have the easiest decision to make in the race for attorney general. Democratic incumbent Ellen Rosenblum is a clear choice and should be re-elected.

Before becoming attorney general in 2012, Rosenblum's experience included 22 years as a judge, eight years as a federal prosecutor and five years in private practice. While in office, she has been called "The People's Attorney General" for her reputation of looking out for those Oregonians who are most vulnerable. She has championed enforcement of the Internet Crimes Against Children Act, which includes prosecuting sexual predators and child pornographers. She has also prioritized fighting consumer fraud and scams targeting older Oregonians, and she secured funding for an elder abuse unit in the attorney general's office.

Ellen Rosenblum

Her opponent, Republican Daniel Crowe, is not ready for a statewide position, and his bluster directed toward Rosenblum during a joint endorsement interview was clearly misplaced. He tried to saddle her with mistakes that were made by others before she even took office, and when made aware of that fact, he was unable to muster another line of attack.

While in office, Rosenblum hasn't needed any of Crowe's bluster. She has been a quiet hand in a difficult job, doing her best to avoid the pitfalls that her predecessor John Kroger fell into. Kroger was unable to finish his term, nor get much meaningful legislation passed. Rosenblum considers both the legal and political ramifications and, while that may make her proposals imperfect, it does mean they have a better chance of becoming law.

If there have been shortfalls during her term, it has been in the area of public records reform. While Rosenblum knows those reforms are much needed, they have yet to be enacted. But she has pledged she will make those reforms, government transparency and openness a priority.

Her experience and performance as attorney general easily warrants another term, and voters should not hesitate in re-electing Rosenblum.

ELECTION'16 | GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Reluctant nod goes to incumbent Brown

In the battle to become Oregon's next governor, color us unsatisfied and disappointed by both candidates.

Incumbent Democrat Kate Brown is facing Republican newcomer Bud Pierce, and voters face a conundrum in this special election of having to choose between a sitting governor who lacks vision, visibility and leadership, or an inexperienced newbie whose debate stumbles showed he's not ready for prime time. The winner will serve the remaining two years of former Gov. John Kitzhaber's term.

Libertarian James Foster, Independent Cliff Thomason and the Constitution Party's Aaron Donald Auer are also on the ballot, but none of the trio provide voters with a suitable alternative to Brown or Pierce.

Given that, we reluctantly give Brown our nod to retain her seat.

Brown is not an elected governor, she was secretary of state and inherited the office through succession when Kitzhaber resigned amid an influence peddling scandal in 2015. Pierce is a Salem oncologist who is seeking state office for the first time.

On the issues, we agree with Pierce on a number of points. He opposes Measure 97, the tax on gross sales of "C" corporations with more than $25 million in revenue; he favors public employee pension reforms to fix the problematic retirement plan; he favors fiscal reform and better oversight of state agencies; and he is against growing government at the expense of the private sector.

On the other side of the ballot, Brown endorsed Measure 97, which would be the largest tax increase in Oregon history, and she initially promised that she would steer the $3 billion a year it would generate to

Kate Brown

funding education, health care and senior citizens. But the Legislature is already whispering about potential changes it may make to the funding plans even before it passes. Instead of leading and taking a public stance, the governor's response thus far has been noncommittal, saying, "It's in the Legislature's hands."

As governor, Brown also hasn't been a visible leader pushing reforms for the ongoing Public Employees Retirement System financial crisis. She and the Legislature had a chance during the last session to initiate action, but were silent and took none. Additionally, she has been noticeably absent from campaigning in Clatsop County to answer constituents' concerns.

Unfortunately for Clatsop County residents, both candidates say they favor Kitzhaber's ill-conceived summary decision to find alternatives to gillnetting on the mainstem of the Columbia River. The action, which called for "adaptive management" of fisheries and fishing methods and was scheduled to be fully implemented by 2017, would make it untenable for most family businesses that depend on the gillnetting to survive. It would also deprive many consumers here of a chance to buy the salmon from non-tribal gillnetters. The plan, however, hasn't worked as state leaders assumed. As a result of the shortcomings, state wildlife commissioners will be meeting next month to discuss options for it going forward.

While the differences between Brown and Pierce on other issues would potentially move us to endorse Pierce, we can't overlook his inexperience or his glaring and unacceptable responses on domestic violence that he made during a debate with Brown in which he said, "A woman that has great education and training and a great job is not susceptible to this kind of abuse by men, women or anyone."

Pierce's comments, which came in the same debate where Brown acknowledged she had once been a victim of domestic violence, were interrupted by loud boos and met with scorching national press.

The recent "Count Her In 2016 Status Report of Women" reported that up to 50 percent of all Oregon women have been the victims of domestic violence.

Pierce has apologized multiple times, and has said it opened his eyes to the problem and he will now join the fight to combat it.

We are pleased that Pierce has seen that light, but as Oregon governor, he would always be in the limelight and any such uninformed and unacceptable statements on any issue reflect on us all.

As a result, voters — reluctantly — should put Brown back in office, and hope for greater leadership going forward.

Watch the editorial board endorsement interviews with EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group at http://bit.ly/2dxpGQb

ELECTION'16 | TREASURER

Read is best suited for treasurer

People accuse those running for treasurer of being a boring lot, but perhaps that is what makes a good treasurer.

The four people seeking the seat do lean toward the soft-spoken and programmatic: Democrat Tobias Read, Republican Jeff Gudman, Independent Chris Telfer and Working Families/Progressive Chris Henry.

Only Read, Gudman and Telfer have actively campaigned, and we support Read.

Tobias Read

Read has the more complete resume, being one of the longest-serving state representatives, since 2007, who rose to House speaker pro tempore.

He also has worked for the U.S. Treasury and has experience in the private sector at Nike.

Telfer, a current Oregon Lottery commissioner and a certified public accountant for more than 30 years, is the most interesting alternative, who has tossed out ways the state could improve the dangerous and inefficient marijuana banking system.

Still, treasurer is not a position where you want to take risks.

The growing problem that the next officeholder will have to face down is the Public Employees Retirement System, a rising menace to Oregon's state budget and its financial future.

In addition to PERS, Read believes the biggest issues that need to be tackled are management of the state's assets with transparency that government has lacked and to deliver Oregonians the best return for their tax dollars.

As treasurer, Read's planned improvements are small but helpful: modernizing the investment program, hiring state employees to manage investments rather than farming out the job to expensive consultants, and slashing Wall Street fees in the process.

He also believes the treasurer's office needs to provide the Legislature with better "straight-ahead" financial analysis that looks at long-term impacts of financial decisions rather than those used by the Legislature for short-term political strategies.

To accomplish those goals, it may take an increase in state treasury employees and their compensation packages, but his ideas make sense.

If a sizable portion of the state's budget is dependent on returns from our investment portfolio, then we should have more control over that investment.

All in all, Read has the right amount of experience and expertise and we think he would do a serviceable job in a very important position.

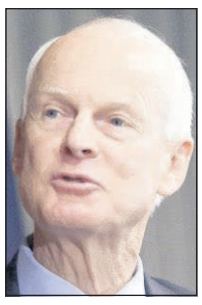
Voters should elect him.

ELECTION'16 | SECRETARY OF STATE

Richardson should be secretary of state

Dennis Richardson's temperament, ability to work with legislators from both political parties and his vision for the Secretary of State's Office make him the best candidate to serve, and voters should elect him to the position.

Richardson, a Republican from Central Point in southern Oregon, is facing Portland Democrat Brad Avakian, who heads the state Bureau of Labor and Industries. The two candidates are vying for the position that oversees state records, business registrations, audits, and voting and elections. Importantly, the secretary of state has two other critical functions: the secretary of state redraws legislative district boundaries if lawmakers are unable to reach agreement; and the secretary of state is first in succession in the event of the resignation or death of the governor. That is how then-Secretary of State Kate Brown became governor after John Kitzhaber resigned.


Dennis Richardson

Richardson ran against Kitzhaber and carried Clatsop County when Kitzhaber was re-elected in 2014. He would bring a steady personality to the office and would provide impartial checks and balances to what he calls a "system broken by a lack of integrity." He would provide a strong presence for accountability, ethics and transparency in state government, and his experience includes 12 years as a state legislator, during which time he was widely known for his ability to work well with other legislators in both political parties.

As secretary of state, Richardson said, he would support reforms for campaign financing, especially in the area of smaller miscellaneous contributions which are nearly impossible track to their source; provide nonpartisan leadership on other elections issues with innovations like creating an independent citizens commission to help develop more clear and accurate ballot titles; would make a priority of examining government spending; and would audit the Department of Human Services, which has had repeated failures in its mission to protect children. To avoid gerrymandering, he advocates planning for the 2020 census and nonpartisanship when the redrawing of legislative districts is considered.

Richardson's opponent, Avakian, has "Hulk-sized" ambitions and a record for partisan activism, even though most of the functions in the office he seeks depend on the appearance of impartiality and neutrality, especially in elections. Avakian has been labor commissioner since 2008, has a background as a civil rights attorney, and his experience includes being both a state senator and representative. He believes the secretary of state's auditing duties should be expanded, without the need of outside approval, to include auditing private corporations that do business with the state, even though other state leaders and agencies already have that responsibility. He does not believe gerrymandering is a problem in Oregon.

Avakian's ambitions and agenda simply don't make him a good fit for secretary of state. Integrity, accountability and vision make Dennis Richardson far better suited to occupy the secretary of state's office, and voters should make Richardson their choice.

ELECTION'16 | MEASURE 95

Universities need investment options

Measure 95 gives Oregon's universities a better ability to control their own financial destinies. It deserves voter approval.

The measure, if approved, gives universities the ability to invest in stocks and corrects a conflict with a provision in the Oregon Constitution that occurred when the state Legislature created independent governing boards for the universities in 2013.

The Legislature's intent in 2013 was to allow the universities to each manage their money wisely by giving them more investment options, including stock ownership, but a provision in the Constitution bans state ownership of equities. That conflict creates a glitch with the investment options that the Legislature tried to provide.

Measure 95 fixes the error by exempting universities from the constitutional prohibition and will allow them to better manage both the financial risk of leaving money on the table when better investment options are available, and with strategies to improve their financial returns on their investments. It's also important to note that Measure 95 has nothing to do with university foundations, which routinely invest in stocks of all kinds and are independent of the universities and the state's investment oversight. The measure only applies to the state-supported universities themselves and the amounts of money in their accounts from things like student tuition, room and board, and money from state appropriations and other sources.

Long term, larger returns for the universities could help keep tuition down and more affordable for students.

Voters should give Measure 95 a resounding "Yes."

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