

# Brown: Wants to increase the number of insured adults

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In November, she is up against a moderate Republican, state Rep. Knute Buehler of Bend, who she defeated in a 2012 race for secretary of state.

As a Democrat, Brown enters the race with an advantage among the state's liberal-leaning electorate. Her campaign has focused on her wealth of political experience beginning in 1991 and has sought to discredit Buehler's claim to support pro-choice policies.

In response to Buehler's outreach to Independents, nonaffiliated voters and even Democrats, Brown has highlighted the times when she brought conservatives and liberals together to address shared problems. Last year, for instance, she negotiated with Republicans to secure their votes for a \$5.3 billion transportation package.

"I'm the only one in the race that has a track record of bringing Oregonians together to tackle difficult issues facing Oregon," Brown said during an editorial board meeting at Pamplin Media Group this month. "I'm a consensus builder and a collaborator. And that's the same kind of strategies I'll use if Oregonians give me the opportunity to serve as governor for four more years."

Here are the specifics on where she stands on the issues:

## Education

One of her top priorities for another term is to improve the state's four-year high school graduation rate. Only 74.8 percent of high school seniors earned a diploma in 2016, making Oregon's the third worst on-time graduation rate in the nation. The first part of her strategy is to follow the statute that voters approved

with Measure 98 in 2016.

Brown says she will seek to nearly double the investment in high school career and technical education to \$300 million in the next biennium. Secondly, she wants to expand access to prekindergarten programs to an additional 10,000 students. She wants to expand the school year to 180 days. Finally, she wants to look for ways to improve teachers' access to professional development and mentoring.

## Health care

Another of her priorities is to increase the number of insured adults from 94 percent to 99 percent and insured children from over 98 percent to 100 percent.

## Housing and homelessness

Brown has pledged to request \$370 million from the Legislature for affordable housing incentives and housing assistance in the next two years. Since she became governor, lawmakers have allocated \$300 million to assist in building affordable units, homelessness prevention programs and rental assistance. Oregon Housing and Community Services has awarded subsidies and tax credits to build about 15,000 units in the past three years.

## Gun control

Next year, Brown plans to again introduce legislation to prohibit transfer of a firearm for 10 business days if the Oregon State Police is unable to determine whether the recipient is eligible to receive the weapon. The proposal is known as closing the "Charleston loophole." She supports raising the legal age from 18 to 21 to purchase an assault rifle and a ban on bump stocks.

## Environment

The governor supports and her staffers are active in helping to craft legislation to create what is known as a cap-and-trade program called "Clean Energy Jobs."

Cap-and-trade programs set an allowance, or a cap, for the amount of carbon dioxide industry can emit free of charge. Any business that released more than that amount would be required to buy credits at auction to offset emissions. The proceeds of those purchases would go toward investing in projects aimed at stemming climate change.

She also was a player in passing the state's Low Carbon Fuels Standard to reduce the intensity of carbon in fuel and the statewide plan to gradually abandon coal-generated electricity.

## Public Employees Retirement System

Public employers are in heavy debt over the state's generous public retirement benefits. Brown has spearheaded some modest changes to the pension system, such as incentives for public employers to pay off debt, but none so far have made a significant impact on the state's \$25 billion unfunded future obligation to retirees.

Brown said she wants covered workers to have "skin in the game," and noted that after recent rounds of collective bargaining, 98 percent of state workers will pay 6 percent of their salary for their pension side accounts. That's known as the "employee contribution," but had long been paid by the state.

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# Buehler: Would be willing to support a carbon tax

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partisan labels" that have increasingly polarized the nation.

"Oregon is hungry for an independent-minded leader who is able to close a lot of these divides ... and is a governor for everyone no matter who you are, where you live, who you love or even how you are registered to vote," he said during a recent editorial board meeting of the Pamplin Media Group.

Since his election to the state House in 2014, Buehler has voted both with and against his party.

This is the second time he has challenged Kate Brown for state office. That last time they faced off was for secretary of state in 2012, a race won by the Democrat.

Here are the specifics on where he stands on the issues:

## Education

Buehler released an ambitious outline earlier this year to boost the state's public education system from bottom five among the states to the top five in five years.

## Health care

Buehler, an orthopedic surgeon, has pledged to protect Oregonians from federal cuts to the Medicaid program, which provides health care subsidies for low-income residents, and to advance the state's innovative coordinated care organizations. He said he wants to integrate mental health care into the Oregon Health Plan — the state's version of Medicaid — and in health care delivered by those CCOs. He says he supports a woman's right to choose but has been criticized for voting against the state's Reproductive Health Equity Act, which bans a co-payment for reproductive health care and also requires the Oregon Health Plan to provide that care to

undocumented residents, without charge.

## Housing and homelessness

Buehler has proposed creating 4,000 emergency shelter beds statewide to get homeless residents off the streets, partly with state funding and partly with federal and philanthropic contributions. He supports measures to fast-track housing development and offer property tax abatement to incentivize the construction of affordable units. He also is a proponent of tweaks to the state's land use laws to make it easier to build affordable housing in areas that are now outside the urban growth boundary.

## Gun control

Buehler supports a ban on bump stocks and raising the legal age to purchase an assault rifle from 18 to 21.

In 2017, he voted for Brown's legislation to confiscate firearms from domestic abusers.

He voted against a bipartisan bill designed to prevent suicides and other gun violence by creating a way to petition the courts to temporarily confiscate a firearm from a family member or loved one who is at risk of harming others or themselves. "... if you are going to take away someone's fundamental right in regards to the Second Amendment, in my opinion, they need due process," Buehler said. "They need to have their time in court, too, to make their case why they shouldn't have their firearm taken from them, and most other states have that due process component in the legislation."

He also opposed a proposal by Brown to prohibit the transfer of a firearm for 10 business days if Oregon State Police are unable to determine whether the recipient is eligi-

ble to receive the weapon. The proposal is known as closing the "Charleston loophole."

## Environment

Buehler opposed a proposed cap-and-trade program in Oregon earlier this year but says he would be willing to support a carbon tax to address climate change.

Cap-and-trade programs set an allowance, or a cap, for the amount of carbon dioxide industry can emit free-of-charge. Any business that released more than that amount would be required to buy credits at auction to offset its emissions. The proceeds of those purchases would go toward investing in projects aimed at stemming climate change.

Buehler says he opposed that plan because the revenue went to the Department of Environmental Quality rather than bolstering the state's general fund.

He voted for the state's Low Carbon Fuels Standard to reduce the intensity of carbon in fuel in 2015 and for a statewide plan to gradually abandon coal-generated electricity in 2016.

## Public Employees Retirement System

Buehler says he would move the pension program's \$25 billion in unfunded obligations to retirees to the top of his agenda.

"I won't sign any new spending bills until I have a PERS reform bill on my desk," he said. Reforms he would like to see would cap annual payouts to future retirees at \$100,000 per year; require public employees to contribute to their retirement fund; and transition the pension plan to a 401(k) retirement plan.

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Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is moving into phase two of a plan to control cormorants on East Sand Island.

# Cormorants: Observers have not recorded any issues with the island colony this year

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The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is reviewing a proposal from the Army Corps to excavate portions of the island and make other changes to further restrict where the birds can build nests.

A large Caspian tern colony on the island has long been managed by limiting the amount of quality nesting habitat available.

"The whole point of our phase two activities is to lean toward a long-term solution that limits the need for human presence out there that could cause dispersal for the birds or disruption," said Kris Lightner, an environmental specialist with the Army Corps.

This year, the Corps' contractors tried to keep the seasonal double-crested cormorant nesting on one side of a privacy fence.

The agency also received a permit to destroy up to 500 double-crested cormorant eggs this year in an effort to further reduce the massive colony. In prior years — over objections and legal challenges by environmental and conservation groups — contractors shot adult birds.

As of mid-September, the Army Corps had only taken

three eggs, all from nests built on the wrong side of the fence.

It is possible the agency may request another permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to allow contractors to destroy eggs next year, too, but the Corps has not made a firm decision yet. The Corps typically requests a renewal of the depredation permit in January, said Miel Corbett, a spokesperson for Fish and Wildlife Service.

Double-crested cormorants abandoned the island and their nests in 2016 and 2017 — years when contractors were shooting adult birds. These events prompted the Audubon Society of Portland to demand that the Fish and Wildlife Service not issue a depredation permit to the Corps earlier this year until there could be a thorough investigation into why the birds left.

At the time, the Army Corps blamed bald eagles and potentially other predators for the disturbances. But, later, they also looked into the possibility that people working on or around the island as well as the culling caused the cormorants to leave the island.

"We don't have any way to firmly say one specific action caused the abandonment," Lightner said.

Observers on the island

have not recorded any issues with the double-crested cormorant colony this year. Reports note the progression from the arrival of cormorants on the island to breeding and nesting behavior and the appearance of eggs then chicks.

By mid-August, a mix of small, younger double-crested cormorant chicks and larger, older chicks were seen on the island.

Another thing the Army Corps knows for certain is that contractors monitoring the colony are seeing even more cormorants nesting on the Astoria Bridge.

Cormorants often nest on the bridge, but observers counted a population boom there in 2016 and 2017. Where people were used to seeing an average of 75 to 100 nests each season, they found around 600 at one count in 2016.

"This colony has doubled or nearly doubled in size every year since (double-crested cormorants) began nesting here and it looks like that pattern will continue," Lightner said.

It is possible the Oregon Department of Transportation will have to get a permit to remove nests and eggs in several years to complete scheduled maintenance on the bridge.



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