

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Mitchell for state House, with reservations

Let's be realistic — the race to replace retiring state Rep. Deborah Boone, D-Cannon Beach, was likely decided in the May 15 primary.

Democrats have long dominated House District 32, which includes Clatsop and Tillamook counties, along with a small portion of western Washington County.

It would take a very strong message for the GOP to flip the seat. Republican Vineeta Lower has not offered one, in our opinion.

That appears to leave a clear path for Democrat Tiffany Mitchell on Nov. 6. We have some concerns about that.

Outside money, outside influence

As we noted in the primary, we are dismayed by the amount of money poured into this campaign by outside interests, and the extent to which Mitchell's campaign has been stage-managed by public-sector employee unions.

Only a fool would believe that such largesse does not come with strings attached.

John Orr, who was defeated by Mitchell in the Democratic primary, hit the nail on the head in his concession speech.

"I still wonder why this election had corporations and organizations from around Oregon campaigning for my opponents," Orr said. "Now it's time for the winner to listen to the residents of House District 32."

We think Mitchell is sincere in her stated desire to represent the district's best interests, and to fight in Salem on behalf of her working-class constituents.

However, we also think her union backing eliminates any chance of a substantive conversation about the state's Public Employees Retirement System liability. All other issues pale in comparison.

Oregon's public pension deficit has grown to \$25.3 billion, which means



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Tiffany Mitchell and Brian Halvorsen at a candidate forum at Astoria High School.

schools and local and state governments will need to drain an additional \$1.4 billion from their projected 2019-21 budgets to feed the pension beast, The Oregonian recently reported.

The amount is much higher than employers had been led to expect and comes on top of the \$900 million jump included in the current two-year budget cycle, the newspaper said.

Where will that money come from? The pockets of the rest of the state's taxpayers?

Mitchell agrees that the benefits for higher-paid state retirees are exorbitant. While the state cannot walk back promises to employees, it needs to get creative in paying down pension obligations, such as incentivizing agencies to find cost savings and spending any extra in budgets toward paying down the liability, she said.

She has also called for raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations to provide more revenue.

"I don't think taxes should be raised on regular people," she told The Daily Astorian's editorial board.

We agree, though the wealthy and

corporations have a stranglehold on the Legislature, presenting big hurdles to tapping that revenue source.

We also agree that teachers have been unfairly vilified in the PERS debate. We believe they have the right to competitive wages and comfortable retirements. Education should be one of the state's top priorities.

But we can't afford to hire more teachers, properly support our schools or do much to reduce class sizes if the PERS debt is not brought under control.

Lower not prepared

We have been very disappointed in Lower's campaign, and do not believe she is a moderate enough candidate to win.



Vineeta Lower

She did not appear at candidate forums in Astoria, Seaside and Cannon Beach featuring two of her opponents — Mitchell and Independent candidate Brian Halvorsen.

She was unprepared to talk about

affordable housing, PERS or most of the statewide ballot measures during her editorial board interview. When pressed, she did say she supports Measure 105, which would repeal the state's sanctuary law.

While she said she doesn't like President Donald Trump's tone, she has also said she's OK with just about everything he's doing. We don't think that's a message that resonates with most of the electorate in the district, which presents an even higher hurdle to her chances of flipping the seat.

Finally, we are disturbed at some of the attacks employed against Mitchell by Lower and her supporters. Lower appears in a video on TV and online featuring street demonstrations in Portland — presumably a criticism of Mitchell's involvement in the progressive group Indivisible North Coast — saying "we need leaders that bring us together, not tear us apart." Really? This coming from a Trump supporter?

An especially despicable mailer from a group called Women's Leadership Coalition PAC criticizes Mitchell's pro-abortion stance, featuring photos of a premature baby named Coeli.

What about the independents?

We actually like Halvorsen, the Independent candidate from Rockaway Beach. He is smart, articulate and well-informed.

However, he is very narrowly focused on campaign finance reform — which we admire — and income inequality, which is a noble thought but not going to be solved anytime soon.

We don't think he has much of a chance in this election, but hope he pursues public office at the local level. He has the energy and ideas to make a difference.

The Libertarian candidate in the race, Randell Carlson of Tillamook, has been invisible during the campaign.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Will continue to represent constituents in Gearhart

Though I am not a man of many words, I have strong core values, and I realize it is my job to represent my constituents, not myself. I have attended countless meetings, working hard to create solutions for the Gearhart we all want to protect. I am not about creating chaos, conflict and confusion.

Having lived in Gearhart for 33 years, I am proud to share my platform because it was forged by my character, created by four years of hard work, and by listening to our citizens.

Honesty. Above all, this is the most important to me. A city councilor's job is to be forthright, direct, and transparent. It requires integrity and reliability.

Solutions. I was instrumental in the creation of Ordinance 901, which was designed to regulate the use of vacation rental dwellings, and the implementation of Ordinance 910, which allows a property owner, with a permit, to remove scotch broom and other invasive species in the beaches and active dunes.

Collaboration. I understand protecting Gearhart is imperative. It takes countless hours and the willingness to involve all those who wish to be heard.

Knowledge. It is my job to understand, interpret, and be familiar with Gearhart's comprehensive plan and ordinances. They were created to protect the Gearhart we all cherish.

Commitment. Yes, Gearhart will continue to face new challenges. I would like to work with you to solve the issues that we will be facing in the coming four years.

KERRY SMITH
Gearhart City Councilor, Position 1

Taylor for Astoria mayor

Although we own some farmland and a building that houses a nonprofit in Astoria, we live in Warrenton. As neighbors of the biggest town in the county, we are affected by what happens in Astoria.

Dulcye Taylor has learned the ins and outs of city government over 10 years of attending City Council meetings. She has

an understanding of the challenges faced by small businesses, having spent 11 years operating Old Town Framing in the heart of downtown.

Over years as president of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, Dulcye has proven to be very adept at:

- Envisioning possibilities.
- Listening carefully and respectfully to a wide array of voices.
- Helping to bring downtown Astoria into the statewide arena through years of work with the Oregon Main Street program, where her efforts were recognized with the Volunteer of the Year award.
- Making a habit of getting to know the people of the community on a daily basis.
- Developing a cordial, cooperative working association with city personnel, who make the work of the mayor and City Council a reality.

A walk with Dulcye inevitably turns into a tour of downtown shops, with frequent stops to ask an opinion, check on a project or just say, "Hi." Not exactly aerobic, but an irrefutable appreciation of Dulcye's passion for her community and the folks with whom she shares it. In reality, Dulcye has been doing mayoral-quality work for years.

TOM and MERIANNE MYERS
Warrenton

Vote Mitchell for state representative

No one disagrees there has been a decline in our political discourse. Blatant lies and vicious name-calling have become the norm. We shouldn't accept this.

Over the past year, I have gotten to know one candidate who, despite baseless political attacks from her opponent, has remained focused on the concerns of our North Coast community.

Tiffany Mitchell has knocked on thousands of doors to talk to as many of us as possible about affordable health insurance, better wages, affordable housing, improvements in teachers' pay and education, and increasing services for mental illness and substance abuse.

Tiffany Mitchell is a candidate for House

District 32 state representative. She grew up in a single-parent household. She's always worked, and understands living on a budget, working to make ends meet.

Tiffany Mitchell will take her positive energy, focus, and strong work ethic to Salem. I urge you to vote for Tiffany Mitchell for House District 32 state representative.

LAURA ALLEN
Seaside

Jones for Astoria mayor

We work with Bruce Jones at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, and find him to be an excellent manager. In his capacity as deputy director of the museum he is thoughtful, calm, fair and very accessible — all skills that will serve him well as mayor.

In his Daily Astorian candidate profile, Bruce said he "learned to listen, collaborate, find common ground and prioritize action with limited resources" as a Coast Guard leader. And as a city councilor we feel he has been listening to local input, and understands Astoria's upcoming challenges and needs.

One significant issue is the lack of affordable housing, and Bruce is committed to addressing this problem, with concrete suggestions that include building housing rather than a hotel on Youngs Bay.

Astoria needs a leader who can get to work right away on practical solutions that will improve everyday life in our city. We urge you to vote for Bruce Jones.

MARCY DUNNING
CHRISTINE TREXEL
Astoria

Balensifer for Warrenton mayor

An important and illuminating issue has emerged in the race for the mayor of Warrenton. This issue is the relocation of the city library. The charge of lack of transparency in the process of relocation, leveled by candidate John Washington, is simply false.

City commissioners held public meetings over a two-year period before the new

library opened at its present location. The library board also held an open meeting that saw a packed house of both Hammond and Warrenton citizens. If Mr. Washington had cared to attend any of these meetings, he would have seen, firsthand, transparency on display.

Henry Balensifer has an accurate understanding of the problems and processes of city government. His tenure as mayor has been of truth and transparency. He should be re-elected.

DIANE COLLIER
Former Warrenton Library Board member

How much growth can Gearhart handle?

As a Gearhart voter, I ask you how much growth and attending expense is appropriate for our town? Is the city maintaining our livability; our habitat and our infrastructure? Should we be responsible for the county's affordable housing issues by being forced into higher housing densities?

As a voter are you willing to risk our city's resources to the pressure of increased growth, and the increase in servicing such growth? When Kerry Smith supports such growth, he does so at the expense of the city's and our personal resources. He gives no regard to the impact of higher property taxes.

I have missed Smith's solutions to the underfunded maintenance of our city's resources. I have published outcome-based solutions regarding our livability. I ask you — what has Smith done in the last four years to merit your confidence that in the next four, he will fight to protect you from greater taxes and liabilities?

This election must not be about old relationships and grandiose plans. Rather, it must be about the person who has the urgency and experience to fight for the city's, and your, financial well-being. I have those qualities and I will fight to preserve the health and financial integrity of Gearhart. I respectfully ask for your vote.

JACK ZIMMERMAN
Gearhart