

## Candidates: Election on May 19

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Democrats outnumber Republicans in state House District 32 and have held the seat since 2002. But Republicans, buoyed by a rural backlash against proposed climate change legislation, are facing one of their best opportunities to take the seat.

Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, a trial assistant for Clatsop County and a board member with the Sunset Empire Transportation District, is running in the Democratic primary in May against George Kiepkke, a former county commissioner.

In the Republican primary, Tillamook Mayor Suzanne Weber is facing off against Vineeta Lower, an online educator who lost a close election in 2018 to Mitchell.

Boothe-Schmidt and Weber have emerged as favorites, gathering almost all fundraising so far. Weber, a retired educator, amassed more than \$40,000 in donations as of Monday from the regional business community to Lower's \$3,000. Boothe-Schmidt has raised more than \$24,000, while Kiepkke has recorded no contributions.

### Republicans

Weber estimates she has reached around 120,000 people, mostly through Facebook videos. During a recent Zoom teleconference for candidates organized by Republicans, she said the North Coast needs better representation than Mitchell, who has taken heat over her support for cap and trade to help combat climate change and a corporate activity tax to provide more funding for public schools.

"It's my hope to bring common sense back to the Legislature and back to Salem in the form of what we and the North Oregon Coast believe," Weber said.

Weber said defeating cap-and-trade legislation is her top priority. She also took

aim at the Student Success Act, which was financed by a corporate activity tax to support educational reforms she believes need to be voided.

Weber has gathered almost all major donations from the regional business community, including \$5,000 from a political action committee for Oregon real estate agents; \$3,000 from Hampton Lumber; and \$1,500 each from the #TimberUnity PAC, the North Coast First PAC and Koch Industries. Koch is the owner of the Georgia-Pacific Wauna Mill, which would have faced emissions regulation under the proposed cap-and-trade bill.

"Vineeta Lower is a lovely lady," Weber said of her opponent by phone last week. "I think that I am more electable because I have more experience in public office."

Lower said Mitchell has turned her back on North Coast constituents.

"I want to really work on addressing this ... tax exhaustion that we have recently seen implemented," she said at the recent teleconference.

Lower pointed to state fees for paddleboarding and canoeing as inappropriate, as well as protecting vulnerable populations on fixed incomes from property tax increases and addressing the high cost of medication.

### Democrats

Boothe-Schmidt announced her candidacy the same day Mitchell publicly revealed she wasn't running for reelection. Kiepkke, a former Clatsop County commissioner, also filed at the last minute for the Democratic primary.

Boothe-Schmidt said it seemed like a good time to parlay her experience with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to serving Oregonians as a whole.

"I can fight for better wages, safer working conditions, affordable health

care," she said. "I can take my experience working with the union, and hopefully take that to Salem and benefit the whole district, not just the union local."

She has so far raised more than \$17,000 from her union and \$1,000 from the Service Employees International Union, which helped propel Mitchell to victory in 2018.

It's been challenging to get her name out amid government restrictions over the coronavirus, Boothe-Schmidt said. She's so far focused on phone- and text-banking, with flyers coming out soon.

Kiepkke said he's been doing online forums and interviews with unions, Realtors and other interest groups. He said the first priority is getting the economy back on track, in part by getting Democrats and Republicans to work together in the Legislature. The last two legislative sessions have been stymied by Republican walkouts over cap-and-trade legislation.

State legislators "have got to be able to improve relationships where we can sit down at the table and talk about things and come up with a consensus, and not have this supermajority crammed down your throat," he said of Democratic advantages in the state House and Senate.

Aside from teleconferences, the election has not featured the usual public forums where candidates stake their positions. The American Association of University Women canceled a forum planned for last week. Liz Bartell, president of the association, said the group is unsure whether there will be a future forum virtually or in person.

Andy Davis, the chairman of the Clatsop County Democratic Central Committee, said the party has been inviting candidates for all offices to speak at its monthly meetings. The party has discussed a possible candidate forum, he said.

## Goonies: Virtual celebration in the works

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was also canceled.

"It's like crab festival as far as the town being sold out," Regina Willkie, the chamber's marketing manager, said of "The Goonies" celebration.

The uncertainties stemming from government restrictions over the virus made the challenge of putting on such a large event insurmountable, Willkie wrote in an online announcement of the event's cancellation.

"Even if restrictions are eased and we can come together on that weekend, we do not anticipate that our venues, shops, lodgings, or restaurants will be ready to handle thousands of participants coming to our community that weekend," she wrote.

The chamber is considering rescheduling "The Goonies" celebration for the fall, Willkie said.

A virtual celebration in the works could include online presentations, fan contests,



The Astorian

An estimated 12,000 people came to Astoria in 2015 for the 30th anniversary of 'The Goonies.' The Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce canceled the 35th anniversary celebration of the iconic film over coronavirus concerns.

a shopping portal and other activities. Fans can get updates and provide suggestions through the chamber's social media profiles and the event website, thegoondocks.org.

The chamber is also creating a permanent One-Eyed Willy's Treasure Hunt, an interactive feature of the 30th anniversary that had attendees solving codes at different filming locations, for people

to do any time.

The next major summer event is the Astoria Regatta scheduled for early August.

Melissa Grothe, vice president of the Regatta's board, said the group will meet in June to decide how to move forward. All events the Regatta court would have been involved with have been canceled through May, she said.

## Teacher: 'Definitely been a challenge'

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Right now, Walker's top priorities are keeping herself sane, her kids happy and being the best teacher she can be for her fourth graders, even if it's at a distance.

She has broadened the definition of what an educational experience can be and shifted to more of an outdoor school model with her kids.

There is a lot of fort building and gardening to keep everyone from burning out. She takes some time for herself and repeats, "I am a patient mother," over and over again.

"It has definitely been a challenge," Walker said. Still, she added, "I think it's a great opportunity for both groups (my students and my kids) to see how much we rely

on community. We take for granted being in a classroom, if that's where we were."

"The days of kicking and screaming about going to school, in my house and for most of my students, is long gone," she said. "They're begging to go back to school."

The ducklings have helped a bit — so far.

"They're tiny and really easy right now, so ask me in three months," she said.

For parents struggling to take over the role of teacher, "I would say ask your kids what they want to learn about and do that. Let them research and create things," Walker said. Her own kids recently built a fort with a water collection system. They are pen pals with cousins in Klamath

Falls.

"This is a time where students can really lead their learning," Walker said. "If my students can find a love or a passion for something and they don't do a lot of the work I've posted, I'm OK with that."

She suggests looking at everyday activities as a chance to teach and learn. Bake with them. Ask them questions, find out what they love.

"It's OK to go rogue," she said. "You just want them to be engaged."

The one thing Walker hopes all parents emphasize, however, is reading.

"Don't stress too much about the other things," she said, "but kids need to be reading."

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