

OPINION



the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Bonamici, Merkley for Congress

Many Americans view Congress solely through a partisan political lens, which is why the legislative branch of our government is often the least popular.

But Congress is the branch closest to the people, with the power to craft laws, direct federal spending and hold the president accountable.

Like with our presidential endorsement, we take a more regional approach to evaluating candidates for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

While it is nice when our representatives play a part in national politics, we prefer when they focus on being effective for the North Coast and for Oregon.

U.S. House

We endorse U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici in the 1st Congressional District.

The Democrat won a special election in 2012 and spent her first several years in Washington, D.C., in the minority until Democrats took back the House after the 2018 elections.

"I have taken to Congress the approach that I used in the state Legislature, which is to build relationships and find common ground," she said.

Her policy work centers on education, child care, trade and the environment, including issues critical to the coast, such as research into ocean acidification and harmful algal blooms. She has called for a more cohesive national strategy to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, particularly on the obstacles for small business.

Bonamici is the chairwoman of the House Education and Labor Committee's subcommittee on civil rights and human services, which has jurisdiction over equal employment opportunities and work incentive programs. The congresswoman is also the co-chair of the House Oceans Caucus and serves on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

On national concerns, we agreed with Bonamici's vote to impeach President Donald Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress for pressuring Ukraine to open an investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden.

Bonamici was also among the lawmakers to forcefully speak out



U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, a Democrat, serves the 1st Congressional District.

against federal immigration arrests at courthouses in Oregon, which can have a corrosive influence on the integrity of our courts.

We would like to see Bonamici take a more active role in policy discussions on the North Coast that have federal components, such as preparing for a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami, improving mental health and substance abuse treatment and expanding child care options.

Bonamici recently joined U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden in a letter to the U.S. postmaster about the inadequate condition of the Warrenton post office and the potential of moving the post office to a new location.

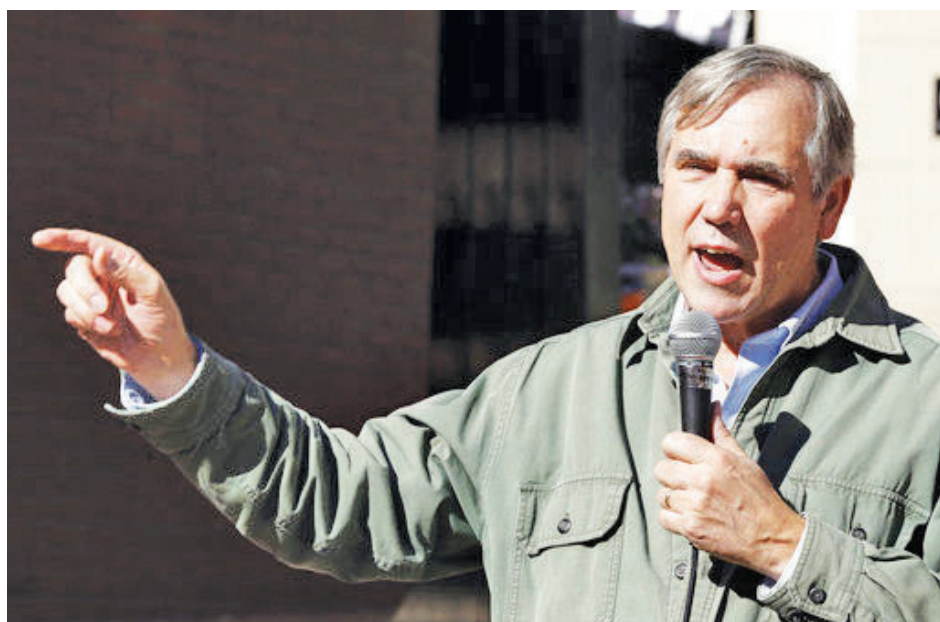
The congresswoman also stepped up and urged the Oregon Health Authority and Pacific Seafood to provide more information and answer community concerns about a coronavirus outbreak among workers at the Warrenton plant.

Bonamici has leverage that some of our local and state elected officials do not. She should use it more often.

Chris Christensen, who describes himself as a small-business owner, entrepreneur and artist, is the Republican candidate.

With no prior government experience, he has campaigned on themes of law order and gun rights and has been critical of anti-fascist protesters and the movement to defund police.

On his Facebook page, Christensen praises Trump and appears to share many of the grievances of the far right. He has also posted a video endorsement from Roger Stone, a political consultant whose prison sen-



Don Ryan/AP Photo

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, serves Oregon.

tence for lying to Congress and witness tampering related to WikiLeaks and Russia's involvement in the 2016 election was commuted by the president.

U.S. Senate

We endorse U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Elected in 2008, the Democrat is among the most liberal in the Senate and has become a national voice for progressives, even flirting with a presidential campaign.

A relentless critic of President Trump — he voted to convict the president of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress — the senator engages in the kind of hand-to-hand political combat on social media and cable television that fuels our nation's hyperpartisan climate.

We appreciate that Democrats need to take a stand against Trump — and we agree with Merkley more often than not — but the senator represents all of Oregon. DHM Research, a Portland-based polling firm, puts support for Trump in Oregon at 39%, the same as it was in 2016, so we question whether all the harsh words about the president have made much of a difference in public opinion at home.

Individual senators have considerable power, even when, like Merkley, they are in the minority. Merkley also serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee, an influential perch with control over federal money. The senator is the ranking member on the subcommittee that oversees spending on agriculture, rural development, the Food and Drug Administration and

related agencies.

We see Merkley at his most valuable when he uses his power and influence for Oregon, securing federal money to help combat the coronavirus pandemic and devastating wildfires, improve highways, bridges and rural airports and provide grants for economic development and environmental restoration.

At a virtual town hall with Clatsop County constituents over the summer, the senator correctly framed the challenge of our times: "This is like living through a novel, an apocalyptic novel or movie, with the pandemic, with the implosion, with the much-needed conversation about discrimination and public safety quality.

"But let's use this to know that we have an opportunity that comes from these conversations in this moment to develop a better system, better laws."

Jo Rae Perkins, who lives in Albany and has worked in real estate and finance, lost Republican primary campaigns for Senate and House before winning the May primary to face Merkley.

Perkins earned national attention for her support of QAnon, a baseless conspiracy theory that places Trump at the heart of a global fight against satanic forces, pedophilia and child trafficking.

Savvy Republicans may not want to squander money or an up-and-coming political prospect on a losing bid against Merkley, but candidates like Perkins do real damage to the GOP's brand down ballot.

The party of Mark Hatfield and Tom McCall deserves better.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pause to reflect

For those who missed it, I would encourage you to read and digest Sheriff Matt Phillips' guest column on Sept. 17, "We have more in common than believed."

His explanation of Black Lives Matter gave me pause to reflect, and hopefully will tickle the conscience of us all.

ED JOHNSON
Astoria

Engaged leader

Tom Brownson is an engaged leader who works for the greater good. As I have had the privilege of working with all sorts of people on different elected boards, I would put Tom in the category of people who are good to work with.

I believe he is unencumbered by any ideological bias or ulterior motives, and is genuinely motivated by making a positive difference in the world around him.

His opponent is running based on concerns he has with the representation on the Astoria City Council. I could agree with some of those concerns, but would not find fault in Brownson in those regards. Tom is part of the solution.

It is good to have a choice in any election. I really believe that. I hope your choice is to vote for Brownson to represent Ward 2 on the City Council.

DIRK ROHNE
Astoria

Responsible

I understand that the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board has made a motion to pursue the purchase of Broadway Middle School, even though taxpayers voted "no" in November 2018.

That vote stands until such time that this matter goes before the taxpayers for another vote.

In the meantime, the board and all of its members will be held responsible for any monies withdrawn from the tax base for the purpose of purchasing Broadway Middle School.

MARTI WAJC
Seaside

Free and fair

Everyone wants their vote to count. We believe in free and fair elections. In Oregon, we have used mail-in ballots for years with no problems.

Mail-in ballots have made it easier for more of us to participate in our elections. Mail-in ballots also make our elections more secure, because there is a paper trail, a record of each person's vote.

The Russians can't hack into mail-in ballots. But President Donald Trump and the current Republican administration are trying to scare us with ridiculous, false claims about mail-in ballots, even saying they want to get rid of the ballots.

Debbie Boothe-Schmidt's Republican opponent has not disputed these false claims.

The head of her party, President Trump, wants to throw out our ballots and refuses to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he loses the election. Debbie's Republican opponent has said nothing to tell us she disagrees, let alone is appalled by this.

My vote via a mail-in ballot goes to Boothe-Schmidt. And I'm using our U.S. postal system to mail in my ballot.

RUSS MEAD
Seaside

C'mon

I am an unaffiliated voter, not of the Independent Party, but have been the recipient of campaign mailers from Debbie Boothe-Schmidt and Suzanne Weber asking for my vote.

Debbie clearly states that she is a Democrat, but Suzanne is reluctant to describe herself as a Republican. Why is that? Does she realize that House District 32 is traditionally a largely Democratic enclave, so doesn't want prospective voters to tie her to the GOP?

C'mon, Weber. Stand on your principles. And stop using unflattering photos of Debbie on your mailers. It's the type of cheap politics that has become so common in today's discourse.

Please vote Boothe-Schmidt. She has

integrity and will stand by her principles.

ROBERT POTTER
Astoria

My support

Now is the time to vote for our community of House District 32, and not for just a rubber-stamp Portland politician. Suzanne Weber has my support, and my vote, because she will always stand up for the North Coast.

I am a proud member of United Steelworkers Local 1097, and have worked in the paper sector for over 28 years. I am also the president of the Astoria chapter (North Coast Labor Federation) of the AFL-CIO.

In this role, I have worked with Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, and know her roots run deep in our community and that she works hard for the labor movement. However, I don't believe it is her time.

Portland politicians are pushing good manufacturing jobs like mine out of state. At this time, we need a representative who will fight for the North Coast way of life, and has a proven track record like Suzanne.

As the mayor of Tillamook, Suzanne has kept true to our North Coast values, while still helping the community grow.

This is why I will be voting for Weber this November.

MIKE SMITH
Knappa