

Witt to campaign for Salem-area state House seat

Clatskanie Democrat's district was redrawn

By GARY WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

State Rep. Brad Witt has filed to run in the Democratic primary for a Salem-area district with no incumbent.

The Clatskanie Democrat has represented House District 31 since his appointment in 2005. The district includes parts of Columbia, Multnomah and Washington counties.

In 2020, Witt was reelected with 50.5% of the vote over Republican Brian Stout in one of the closest House races on the ballot.

Witt announced in September that he would not seek reelection, citing redistricting after the census that added more Republicans to his district.

The surprise bid to run for the open House District 19 seat came a day before Tuesday's filing deadline. Witt listed a Salem address as his current home.

Witt was at the center of a controversy during the 2021 session when Rep. Vikki Breese-Iverson, R-Prineville, filed a complaint that Witt had sent her sexually harassing text messages.

Witt said Breese-Iverson misconstrued his banter. But the Oregon House Committee on Conduct found Witt in violation of Rule 27, which bars harassment or discriminatory behavior. The House stripped Witt of three committee assignments.

Witt joins Salem city councilors Tom Andersen and Jackie Leung as candidates in the Democratic primary for House District 19. Salem insurance broker T.J. Sullivan has filed for the Republican primary.

Prior to redistricting, much of the area in and around the new district was represented by Rep. Raquel Moore-Green, R-Salem, and Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem. Moore-Green is running for the state Senate, while Clem did not seek reelection.

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Brad Witt

Election: New Gearhart firehouse on ballot

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Wev, in an email, said, "I am pleased that the voters of District 3 will have a choice in who is representing them on our county commission. The strength of our democracy is the ability for citizens to choose who speaks for them and vote accordingly."

Wev and Pinkstaff spoke shortly after he filed. She said she expects "both of us will focus on the challenges we face and not waste our time on personal attacks."

"I was born and raised here. I love this town. I have chosen to stay here and not move away," Pinkstaff, a deck mechanic for Tidewater Barge Lines, said.

Pinkstaff said he wants to serve as a conduit between the county and Astoria, particularly in finding a solution to homelessness and "cleaning up our downtown."

"I look forward to giving this a run and having a good election," Pinkstaff said.

Thompson, who is running for a third, four-year term, said in a text, "I'm looking forward to constructive conversations about building a better community in Clatsop County."

District 5 covers Cannon Beach, Arch Cape, Hamlet, Elsie, Jewell and a slice of Seaside.

Dillard, an innkeeper with Sandy Cove Inn and Red Door Vacation Rentals, said he had been attending government meetings and looking for a way to get involved. He hopes to address the region's workforce housing

scarcity and help the tourism and hospitality industry flourish in the wake of pandemic shutdowns.

"There are going to be solutions that are developed on a countywide basis, and I think I could assist at that level," Dillard said.

County commission races are nonpartisan. Voters in Gearhart will weigh Measure 4-213, a \$14.5 million bond for a new firehouse off Highlands Lane.

The May ballot also features primaries to choose candidates for state House and Senate in the November election.

State Rep. Suzanne Weber, R-Tillamook, is giving up her House District 32 seat on the North Coast to campaign for the Senate District 16 vacancy created by Betsy Johnson's independent campaign for governor. Weber is unopposed in the Republican primary.

Melissa Busch, a home health nurse from Warren, is unopposed in the Democratic primary and will face Weber in November.

State Sen. Rachel Armitage, a Warren Democrat appointed by county commissioners to temporarily fill Johnson's vacancy, said at the time of her appointment that she would not run for the seat.

In the Republican primary to replace Weber in House District 32, Glenn Gaither, a retired corrections officer from Seaside, is up against Cyrus Javadi, a dentist from Tillamook. Logan Laity, a small-business owner from Tillamook, is unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Jewell: Parents frustrated with turnover

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that by focusing on the kids and focusing on the staff. The rest of it is noise.

"So I see it as - my job is to try to get that focus back to where it needs to be ... Hopefully, I can help with that. I am looking forward to it."

With only a few months remaining in the school year, Gardner said he plans to meet individually with school board members and administrators to get himself up to speed.

The acting superintendent's duties will feature a combination of remote and in-person work. Gardner, who is based in Nevada, plans to make weekly commutes to the school district, spending a few days at a time in Jewell.

In his contract, Gardner will be paid based on days worked, with his weekly earnings prorated at \$800 per day. With the exception of spring break, his contract requires a weekly in-person presence.

After the conclusion of the school board meeting on Monday, Gardner held a discus-

sion with parents and attendees, addressing concerns and answering questions. Topics touched on his availability, communication and the lack of stability in the superintendent role.

Parents expressed frustration with the inability to find a long-term solution at superintendent. Phillips was appointed superintendent in 2019.

"Right now, we are on this every three, four-year cycle of superintendents getting turned around," a parent, who also works at Jewell School, said. "... It's like a hamster in a wheel, you keep on running, you keep on working hard, but you are going nowhere."

Gardner said he could potentially discuss the issue with the school board. He indicated that he would not pursue a permanent role.

Phillips was put on paid administrative leave during a Feb. 15 special session, which followed an executive session. An independent investigation was initiated shortly after.

The school board has not disclosed the reason for the investigation.

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