

Oregon Republicans downplay Trump, tout issues as they aim for state offices

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE Capital Bureau

SALEM — Republican gubernatorial candidate Jeff Smith claims he's got a winning strategy, one that he's willing to share with his competitors: Don't talk about Trump.

"I am working hard to convince them that the issue is not Donald Trump," Smith said, standing in front of his booth at the 54th annual Dorchester Conference, the annual gathering of Oregon Republicans, in Salem on Saturday. "The issue is winning."

Although Smith is lesser-known among the broad bench of Republicans seeking the GOP nomination for governor he was confident at the conference.

Smith's is one of a spectrum of opinions about the role of partisanship and the president at the conference, about eight months ahead of the 2018 election, when state legislative races, congressional seats and the governor's seat will be up for grabs.

Meanwhile, the top Republican in statewide office urged attendees to identify as Oregonians before they identified as Republicans.

Oregon Secretary of State Dennis Richardson told conference attendees in a speech Saturday morning that their identity as Oregonians should come before their identity as Republicans if they wanted their party to win.

Richardson speaks from experience: In 2016, Richardson was the first Republican to win statewide office since 2002, besting Democrat Brad Avakian, the state's labor commissioner.

"I would not be here unless I got Democratic votes, Green Party votes, Independent party of Oregon votes, Working Family Party votes and votes from non-affiliated Oregonians," Richardson said. "And why? Because they wanted to elect somebody who would keep his promise to do that which was best for our state. I said when I was elected you wouldn't be able to tell if there was an 'R' or a 'D' behind my name, and I hope that you can



Former Trump campaign adviser and self-styled "provocateur" Roger Stone was the headline speaker at Saturday's Dorchester Conference in Salem. He is shown with a conference attendee.

see that I've tried to live up to that."

Smith, the gubernatorial candidate, also argues that Republicans can win by homing in on issues that voters in Portland care about, such as health care, education and homelessness.

State Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, who is also jostling for the governor's mansion, also criticized focusing too much on the White House. He claimed in a speech that while he was solving local problems in the Legislature, Democratic Gov. Kate Brown was "fixated on divisive national politics."

The Saturday-night headliner was former Trump campaign adviser and self-styled "provocateur" Roger Stone, who gave a speech touting what he believes to be the accomplishments of the president and condemning Democrats.

He is a controversial figure who remains in the national limelight for his ties to Trump.

A former adviser to the campaign, which he parted ways with in August 2015, Stone has also lobbied on Trump's behalf on Capitol Hill and says he urged the New York real estate tycoon to run for president first in 1988. Stone got his start in national politics working on Richard Nixon's Committee To Re-Elect The President (CREEP).

Stone claimed the president brought African-Amer-

ican unemployment to the lowest level on record, said the president is committed to free trade, and celebrated the contributions of alternative right-wing media outlets and social media to Trump's campaign.

"The rise of a vibrant, robust alternative media, the rise of social media, Twitter,

"I said when I was elected you wouldn't be able to tell if there was an 'R' or a 'D' behind my name."

— Dennis Richardson (R), Secretary of State

Facebook and so on, is what allowed for the election of an outsider candidate who the mainstream media sought to destroy," Stone said.

Stone also warned of what he described as a "tech left" that he believes seeks to censor right-wing perspectives on social media platforms.

The Atlantic reported last week that Stone had corresponded directly with radical-transparency organization WikiLeaks, which is suspected to have ties to Russia, before the 2016 election.

The magazine reported Stone said under oath that he had corresponded with Wikileaks through an "inter-

mediary."

Stone, who on Saturday dismissed what he called "the Russian collusion delusion," told the magazine he provided the full exchange to the House Intelligence Committee, which is investigating whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia to undermine Trump's Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The main speaker Friday, Fox News commentator, author and radio host Kevin Jackson, likewise praised the president and lambasted "leftists."

"What a world you people created on Nov. 8, 2016," Jackson said, referring to the day Trump was elected president, to applause. "I'll never forget the look on those sissies' faces."

He disparaged feminists, prioritized the rights of American citizens first and "human beings second," and criticized the study of the humanities and social justice in the nation's colleges.

"I'm done with feminists," he said.

The chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Oregon, Jeanne Atkins, said earlier this week that the choice of speakers at the conference was "appalling."

"Republicans are increasingly out of touch with voters and their promotion of speakers who are known for hate speech and public deceit is frightening," Atkins said.

Greg Astley, president of the conference, defended the choice of speakers such as Jackson and Stone and said that the Dorchester Conference was a "big tent."

The value of the conference, he said, was that Oregonians from across the state could interact face-to-face with prominent figures, recalling how, attending the conference at 14, he met former Gov. Vic Atiyeh.

If attendees disagreed with a speaker's views, they could go talk to them directly or ask questions, Astley said.

"If we shut down all that kind of conversation, I don't think we'll be any better than the progressive far left," Astley said.

Snowpack fills in, still below average

By GEORGE PLAVEN EO Media Group

February was a tale of two seasons for Oregon's snow-starved mountains and river basins.

The first half of the month saw warm and dry weather carry over from December and January, with total snowpack languishing around 40 percent of normal levels statewide. But winter has come roaring back over the last few weeks, doubling the amount of snow on the ground across some areas, especially in the northern Oregon Cascades.

Julie Koeberle, snow survey hydrologist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Portland, said the amount of snow at Mount Hood rose from 53 inches on Feb. 11 to 118 inches, showing an impressive turnaround.

"It's been really interesting," Koeberle said. "What we waited all season to get, we pretty much got in the last two weeks."

While conditions are much improved, Koeberle cautions snowfall is still lagging behind on average.

"We still need quite a bit more if we're going to catch up to normal," she said.

Portions of southern Oregon are in particularly dire straits, with the Klamath and Owyhee basins still registering below 50 percent of normal snowpack. Klamath County commissioners have already declared a drought emergency, and farmers are bracing for a painful year.

The U.S. Drought

Monitor shows virtually all of central and Eastern Oregon in some type of drought designation, from "abnormally dry" to "moderate drought." Koeberle said she would not be surprised to see more drought declarations as summer nears.

"In a perfect world, we will continue to get snow, but we can't count on that," she said.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, the next three months should bring colder weather to northern Oregon and an equal chance of normal precipitation throughout the state. The lower temperatures should at least bode well for sustaining the current snowpack, Koeberle said, which in turn will help sustain streams longer into the season.

The NRCS will soon release its monthly stream-flow forecast for March which Koeberle said will reflect the latest gains in snowpack.

"Luckily, we've had some improvement in snow. Hopefully that continues," she said. "We still do have time for some improvement, but we just don't know how much we're going to get."

A silver lining for farmers and ranchers continues to be reservoir levels, which continue to hover around normal, Koeberle said. But for those without access to reservoir rights, she said it would be wise to plan for lower water supplies this summer.

Corrections

The article "Canine influenza found in Walla Walla" (March 3, Page 3A) contained an error about the protection rate for dogs vaccinated. The protection rate for dogs vaccinated is 95 percent.

The article "Co-op to expand Columbia River grain terminal" (March 1, Page 3A) contained an error about the rate at which new equipment at the Port of Morrow can process wheat. The correct rate is 60,000 bushels per hour.

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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Marcy Rosenberg • 541-966-0828 • mrosenberg@eastoregonian.com

ADVERTISING

Advertising Director: Marissa Williams
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AccuWeather Forecast: TODAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY. Includes temperature forecasts for Pendleton and Hermiston.

ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

Table with columns: Temperature (High/Low), Precipitation (24 hours ending 3 p.m., Month to date, Normal month to date, Year to date, Last year to date, Normal year to date)

HERMISTON

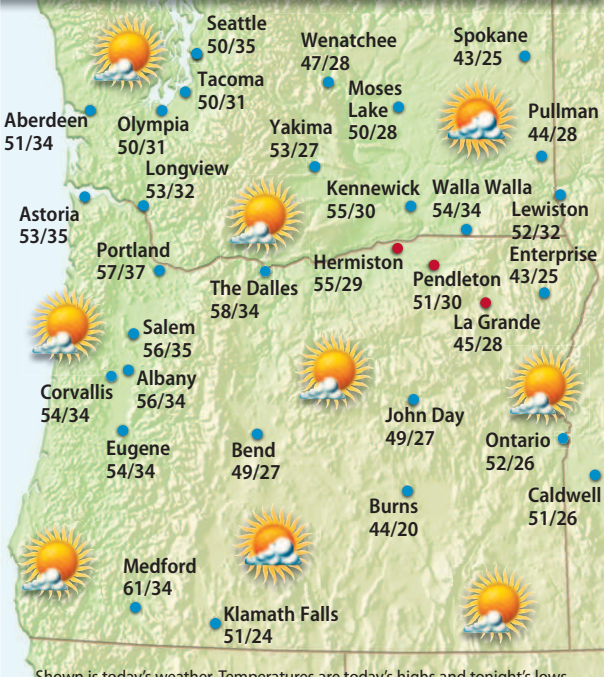
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SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today: 6:25 a.m., Sunset tonight: 5:49 p.m., Moonrise today: 11:18 p.m., Moonset today: 9:06 a.m.

Table with columns: Last, New, First, Full. Dates: Mar 9, Mar 17, Mar 24, Mar 31



REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Mostly sunny today. Partly cloudy tonight. Periods of rain tomorrow. Eastern and Central Oregon: Mostly sunny today. Mainly clear tonight. Sun followed by some clouds tomorrow. Western Washington: Sunshine and patchy clouds today. Clear to partly cloudy tonight. Eastern Washington: Partial sunshine today, a bit of snow with little or no accumulation in the mountains. Cascades: Mostly sunny today; milder in central parts. Mainly clear tonight. Northern California: Partly sunny today. Partly cloudy tonight. Periods of rain tomorrow.

REGIONAL CITIES

Table with columns: City, Today (Hi/Lo/W), Wed. (Hi/Lo/W). Lists cities like Astoria, Baker City, Bend, Brookings, Burns, etc.

WORLD CITIES

Table with columns: City, Today (Hi/Lo/W), Wed. (Hi/Lo/W). Lists cities like Beijing, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Seoul, Sydney, Tokyo.

WINDS

Table with columns: Location, Today (in mph), Wednesday (in mph). Locations include Boardman, Pendleton.

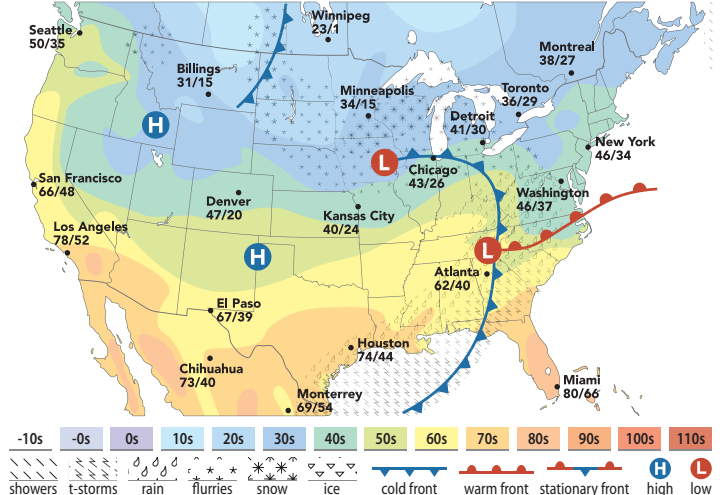
UV INDEX TODAY

Table with columns: Time, UV Index (1-10). Times: 8 a.m., 10 a.m., Noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m., 6 p.m.

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection. Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2018

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



National Summary: Areas of drenching rain and locally gusty thunderstorms will extend from southern Ohio to Delaware, southward to the Gulf Coast today. Snow of varying intensity will affect the North Central states.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states) High 91° in McAllen, Texas; Low -12° in Bridgeport, Calif.

NATIONAL CITIES

Table with columns: City, Today (Hi/Lo/W), Wed. (Hi/Lo/W). Lists cities like Albuquerque, Atlanta, Atlanta City, Baltimore, Billings, Birmingham, Boise, Boston, Charleston, SC, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Fairbanks, Fargo, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Portland, ME, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Reno, Sacramento, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tucson, Washington, DC, Wichita.