

East Oregonian Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Moderate candidates offer best challenge

Eastern Oregon voters have an important say in two major state and federal races in this upcoming primary election.

Republicans have a full stable of candidates jockeying to challenge incumbent Governor Kate Brown in November. Democrats have lined up to make a case against U.S. Representative Greg Walden.

This plethora of candidates may show that the two entrenched incumbents are vulnerable. At the very least, it is proof that a number of people who disagree with them think so. Running for a position that requires significant financial resources and lots of travel across a large geographic space is no small task. And 13 people have signed up for that expensive, exhausting opportunity.

The two races have plenty in common, and plenty in opposition as well. But we include our endorsements in both races in one editorial for a clear reason: Democratic and Republican voters can either use the primary to pick a specialist and partisan who they may have more in common with, or they can choose the candidate who has the best chance to win a general election — and in the meantime bring the debate toward the middle.

In both races, we think the latter option is better.

Republican candidate for governor When Knute Buehler declared his candidacy, he immediately became the favorite to challenge Gov. Brown in November. In the primary campaign, he has been largely absent in the media, in debates and large gatherings of voters. He has instead chosen to use his time for one-on-one campaigning, and to



Knute Buehler

amass his war chest, which is crucial to winning any statewide race.

In his relative absence, both Greg Wooldridge and Sam Carpenter have made a little hay. Carpenter has run his “Make Oregon Great Again” campaign in the image of Donald Trump, surely a losing strategy in a state that Trump lost by 11 points in 2016 and where he is likely even less popular two years later.

Wooldridge has a stellar biography and found an interesting political niche, but Oregon voters have seen their share of out-of-nowhere Republicans with a great image get beaten handily by Democrats at the polls. David Stauffer, Jeff Smith and Bruce Cuff have failed to distinguish themselves.

For us, that means Buehler is the candidate to go forward and give Brown the best race. We already mentioned his significant financial backing, but there is also his statewide name recognition and his moderate voting record, a plus if he



Jamie McLeod-Skinner

gets elected to lead the state alongside a Democratic Party-controlled Capitol.

If Republicans want the best chance to win the governorship in November, they should vote for Buehler this May.

If he gets the nod, we’re looking forward to hearing from him on the debate stage next to Gov. Brown.

Democratic candidate for U.S. Representative (Second District)

The overriding desire of most Americans in the 2018 election will be to rein in the power of Donald Trump. That can happen if the U.S. House and Senate switch to Democratic majorities — which now seems within the realm of possibilities thanks to the retirement of many Republican incumbents and the continuous swirl of controversy around the White House.

Perhaps realizing they may be surfing a wave of anti-Trump pushback, many Democrats filed to take on powerful incumbent Greg Walden.

But we think Democratic voters should stand behind Jamie McLeod-Skinner, who has the best chance to give Walden the toughest race.

She has worked hard to traverse the district, and distinguished herself both in debates and in personal discussions with voters. She has also avoided the pitfalls that can sink a Democratic candidate in a largely rural area. She is knowledgeable and supportive of using our natural resources, but balances that well with environmental protection. She has made clear her support for gun rights, and has family ties that go back generations into the Eastern Oregon ranching community. Her history of government and non-governmental work, with an emphasis on professional ethics and efficient operation, seems like the right message to take to an interesting general election.

Jenni Neahring is an interesting candidate as well. The Bend doctor has a ton of knowledge and some good ideas about health care — and the ability to fundraise — but we’re not sure that would translate into enough votes come November. Jim Crary has some name recognition, having challenged but been beaten by Walden before, and we’re unconvinced anything has changed this time around. Tim White, Michael Byrne, Raz Mason and Eric Burnette make up the other four candidates.

In our opinion, McLeod-Skinner stood out among the crowded field as offering the Democratic candidate who would best appeal to Eastern Oregon voters. She would be up against it in November, but she has the best opportunity to upset the Walden applearct.

YOUR VIEWS

Editor’s note: Many of these letters have been edited for space. They appear at www.eastoregonian.com in their entirety.

No rumor that Murdock won’t finish term

Rumor: Talk or opinion widely dispersed with no discernible source.

The fact that Paul Chalmers openly explained to me the plan of George Murdock resigning just after passing the two-year mark of the term if re-elected and nominating Mr. Chalmers as the interim commissioner to finish out the term would not be considered a rumor. This is coming from a source in the plan. Also, the fact that Mr. Murdock stated in his interview in Wednesday’s paper that “he has heard that rumor before” raises a red flag to me. This is a very specific thing, it would be very odd for multiple people to come up with the same story. So I don’t see this as a rumor like you said in the paper, or a “fabrication” as you put it in a recent forum. I do see this as deception.

Integrity is very important to me, and the “Good Ole Boy” way of doing things does not set well.

Mr. Murdock is correct, he would not be in a position to “appoint,” this is why I said “nominate.”

What this does, is takes the choice of commissioner out of the hands of the voters, you, the people of Umatilla County.

My name is Rick Pullen, and I’m asking for your vote on May 15 for county commissioner.

Rick Pullen
Pendleton

Miller will listen to Hermiston voters

I attended the candidates’ forum recently. I listened to all the candidates for county commissioners and especially for the new people running for the Hermiston City Council. Two guys impressed me. Kyran Miller was one of them, running for Ward 3.

Kyran Miller told it like it is. The city should build its tax base, not raise our taxes. He was right that economic growth can build up the tax base to meet the city needs, without new taxes.

We are all taxed enough. He said he is willing to listen to the people and vote for their concerns. He even volunteered to put up a tent in his front yard to meet with voters if he is elected to be available to the

voters. He will set up an email address and a phone number for the voters so that he can stay in touch and let the public know of issues affecting their lives. He wants more openness to the public. He wants the city to be accountable. His 50 years of business experience could help the city council. He was so positive about Hermiston, its people and its future. It was like a breath of fresh air. Change is happening. It’s time change happens in the Hermiston City Council.

Jack McWhinnie
Umatilla

Vote Breiling for circuit court

After reading a letter published, I felt I had to respond to the “level of competence” it was clearly lacking. To suggest that Michael Breiling has had many court appearances because he doesn’t know what he is doing or that he is doing it just to charge clients more money is a complete untruth and frankly seems to be uncalled-for mud slinging that has no merit. This is an election, not a bar fight.

All anyone would have to do is ask the hundreds of clients that he has served over the last 20 years that keep coming back to him or referring others to him for help. They would be able to tell you that he is a competent, thorough and fair attorney. They would also tell you that in recent years, he charges clients what is called a “flat fee.” What this means is that no matter how many court appearances a case takes, they are not charged any more money than the original amount. So to suggest that he is appearing in court to make more money makes no sense and is blatantly false.

Kimberly Stewart
Pendleton

I first met Mike after he opened his law practice in Pendleton in 1999. I had occasion to work with Mike in a professional setting when I served as the Pendleton police chief. Since my retirement in 2000 I have worked with Mike on a number of criminal cases as a polygraph examiner.

I have found Mike to be an honest, fair, ethical, energetic and quite competent attorney. Besides that, he is a pretty good guy for being an attorney. He has an abundance of experience in the court room as a defense attorney and civil law attorney. Because of his extensive work in the courtroom, he is capable of performing the duties of Circuit Court judge on day one of his term.

Ed Taber
Pendleton Police Chief (retired)

Collins for circuit court judge

I have known Rob Collins in professional and civic capacities for over 10 years. He is a great communicator. I have observed his knowledge of the law, personally, as he has represented me in professional counsel. He has tremendous ability to stay focused and be receptive and impartial, simultaneously. Rob is approachable and has a genuine and thoughtful demeanor in professional matters.

Mary French West
Pendleton

Rob has the character, knowledge, community participation and experience necessary to be an excellent Circuit Court judge.

He has three years of experience practicing law in the 6th Judicial District. His experience includes criminal, civil and domestic relations cases. He also has experience in varieties of non-court practice.

A judge needs, in addition to courtroom experience, to represent the community in which he serves. Rob has the community experience of engagement in the community to apply the Morrow and Umatilla community standards to the application of law in the Circuit Court.

Pete Wells
Pendleton

Bailor for commissioner

Tom Bailor offers a refreshing alternative to the status quo in the county commissioner race. He will bring an open and analytical mind to the challenges of running the county efficiently and equitably.

It’s time for new ideas and perspectives from a candidate who puts fairness ahead of ego.

Hal McCune
Pendleton

Murdock for commissioner

We have known George as a personal friend and leader for several years at our place of employment.

During the years we worked under George, he was a strong and exceptional leader, providing support to not only his employees, but also for 12 school districts in Umatilla, Morrow and Union counties. He has many valuable strengths, including integrity, dedication, and sincerity. George is just a very genuine man.

Linda Smith and Karen Parker
Pendleton

The most important asset of any successful organization is its leadership. Without the ability to lead, guide and support an organization and its goals, there is no chance of achieving a common purpose. George Murdock has displayed amazing ability to listen, learn and lead.

George has a long history of success, which is attributed to his education, experience and analytical skills in defining and attaining worthy goals. It has been a unique privilege in getting to know George and I appreciate his direct communication style and ability to build support among the teams he leads.

If you’re seeking an efficient and service-oriented county organization, I urge you to retain George Murdock as Umatilla County commissioner.

Arne Swanson
Pendleton

Shafer for commissioner

John Shafer has a heart to serve and a deep passion for our communities. He sees a problem and works it through to find a solution and implement a fix. Before he first got onto the Athena City Council years ago he would complain about what was happening with our city. I turned to him and said, “Then go do something about it.” Which is exactly what he did.

He is a great leader. He takes the time to listen to the people and find common ground. If he doesn’t know an answer, he doesn’t pretend to but instead will go research the issue and then come back with an answer.

He works hard and shows up to work, as shown by his stellar record and 17.5 years with the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office.

He will be an active commissioner. John has never been content to sit on the sidelines and watch things happen. He is a doer and takes charge. He has years of experience and is always willing and eager to learn and grow his knowledge base. He cares about Umatilla County.

His desire is to educate our communities about the overwhelming drug problem we are facing here in Umatilla County and to get more help with the mental health challenges we are dealing with. He will fight for the people, he will fight for Umatilla County, and he will fight to always do what is in the best interest of our communities.

Amy Shafer
Athena

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