

2018 GOVERNOR’S RACE

Kate Brown: Calls herself a consensus builder

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

Democratic Gov. Kate Brown — the nation’s first openly bisexual governor and the face of progressive policies such as no co-payments for reproductive health care — is seeking a final term as Oregon governor. On Nov. 6, she is up against a moderate Republican, Oregon Rep. Knute Buehler of Bend, who she defeated in a 2012 race for secretary of state.

As a Democrat, Brown enters the race with an advantage among the state’s liberal-leaning electorate. Her campaign has focused on her wealth of political experience beginning in 1991 and has sought to discredit Buehler’s claim to support pro-choice policies.

In response to Buehler’s outreach to Independents, nonaffiliated voters and even Democrats, Brown has highlighted the times when she brought conservatives and liberals together to address shared problems. Last year, for instance, she negotiated with Republicans to secure their votes for a \$5.3 billion transportation package.

“I’m the only one in the race that has a track record of bringing Oregonians together to tackle difficult issues facing Oregon,” Brown said during an editorial board meeting at Pamplin Media Group on Sept. 19. “I’m a consensus builder and a collaborator. And that’s the same kind of strategies I’ll use if Oregonians give me the opportunity to serve as governor for four more years.”

Here are the specifics on where she stands on the issues:

Education

One of her top priorities for another term is to improve the state’s four-year high school graduation rate. Only 74.8 percent of high school seniors earned a diploma in 2016, making Oregon’s the third worst on-time graduation rate in the nation. The first part of her strategy is to follow the statute that voters approved with Measure 98 in 2018.

Brown says she will seek to nearly double the investment in high school career and technical education to \$300 million in the next biennium. Sec-



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

Gov. Kate Brown

ondly, she wants to expand access to prekindergarten programs to an additional 10,000 students. She wants to expand the school year to 180 days. Finally, she wants to look for ways to improve teachers’ access to professional development and mentoring.

Health care

Another of her priorities is to increase the number of insured adults from 94 percent to 99 percent and insured children from over 98 percent to 100 percent.

Housing and homelessness

Brown has pledged to request \$370 million from the Legislature for affordable housing incentives and housing assistance in the next two years. Since she became governor, lawmakers have allocated \$300 million to assist in building affordable units, homelessness prevention programs and rental assistance. Oregon Housing and Community Services has awarded subsidies and tax credits to build about 15,000 units in the past three years.

Gun control

Next year, Brown plans to again introduce failed legislation to prohibit transfer of a firearm for 10 business days if Oregon State Police are unable to determine whether the recipient is eligible to receive the weapon. The proposal is known as closing the “Charleston loophole.” She supports raising the legal age from 18 to 21 to purchase an assault rifle and a ban on bump stocks.

Environment

The governor supports and her staffers are active in helping to craft legislation to create what is known as a cap-and-trade program

called “Clean Energy Jobs.”

Cap-and-trade programs set an allowance, or a cap, for the amount of carbon dioxide industry can emit free-of-charge. Any business that released more than that amount would be required to buy credits at auction to offset their emissions. The proceeds of those purchases would go toward investing in projects aimed at stemming climate change.

She also was a player in passing the state’s Low Carbon Fuels Standard to reduce the intensity of carbon in fuel and the statewide plan to gradually abandon coal-generated electricity.

Public Employees Retirement System

Public employers are in heavy debt over the state’s generous public retirement benefits. Brown has spearheaded some modest changes to the pension system, such as incentives for public employers to pay off debt, but none so far have made a significant impact on the state’s \$25 billion unfunded future obligation to retirees.

Brown said she wants covered workers to have “skin in the game,” and noted that after recent rounds of collective bargaining, 98 percent of state workers will pay 6 percent of their salary for their pension side accounts. That’s known as the “employee contribution” but had long been paid by the state.

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Knute Buehler: Rejects ‘partisan labels’

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

Despite running for governor on the Republican ticket, state Rep. Knute Buehler has increasingly used the word “independent” to describe himself. Buehler says he rejects the “narrow partisan labels” that have increasingly polarized the nation.

“Oregon is hungry for an independent-minded leader who is able to close a lot of these divides ... and is a governor for everyone no matter who you are, where you live, who you love or even how you are registered to vote,” Buehler said during a recent editorial board meeting of the Pamplin Media Group.

Since his election to the Oregon House of Representatives in 2014, Buehler has voted both with and against his party.

This is the second time he has challenged Democratic incumbent Kate Brown for state office. That last time they faced off was for Oregon secretary of state in 2012, a race won by Brown.

Here are the specifics on where he stands on the issues:

Education

Buehler released an ambitious outline earlier this year to boost the state’s public education system from bottom five among the states to the top five in five years.

Health care

Buehler has pledged to protect Oregonians from federal cuts to the Medicaid program, which provides health care subsidies for low-income residents, and to advance the state’s innovative coordinated care organizations. He said he wants to integrate mental health care into the Oregon Health Plan — the state’s version of Medicaid — and in health care delivered by those CCOs. He says he supports a woman’s right to choose but has been criticized for voting against the state’s Reproductive Health Equity Act, which bans a co-payment for reproductive health care and also requires the Oregon Health Plan to provide that care to undocumented residents, without charge.



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

Rep. Knute Buehler

Housing and homelessness

Buehler has proposed creating 4,000 emergency shelter beds statewide to get homeless residents off the streets, partly with state funding and partly with federal and philanthropic contributions. He supports measures to fast-track housing development and offer property tax abatement to incentivize the construction of affordable units. He also is a proponent of tweaks to the state’s land use laws to make it easier to build affordable housing in areas that are now outside the urban growth boundary.

Gun control

Buehler supports a ban on bump stocks and raising the legal age to purchase an assault rifle from 18 to 21.

In 2017, he voted for Brown’s legislation to confiscate firearms from domestic abusers.

He voted against a bipartisan bill designed to prevent suicides and other gun violence by creating a way to petition the courts to temporarily confiscate a firearm from a family member or loved one who is at risk of harming others or themselves.

“If you are going to take away someone’s fundamental right in regards to the Second Amendment, in my opinion, they need due process,” Buehler said. “They need to have their time in court, too, to make their case why they shouldn’t have their firearm taken from them, and most other states have that due process component in the legislation.”

He also opposed a proposal by Brown to prohibit the transfer of a firearm for 10 business days if Oregon State Police are unable to determine whether the recipient is eligible to

receive the weapon. The proposal is known as closing the “Charleston loophole.”

Environment

Buehler opposed a proposed cap-and-trade program in Oregon earlier this year, but says he would be willing to support a carbon tax to address climate change.

Cap-and-trade programs set an allowance, or a cap, for the amount of carbon dioxide industry can emit free-of-charge. Any business that released more than that amount would be required to buy credits at auction to offset its emissions. The proceeds of those purchases would go toward investing in projects aimed at stemming climate change.

Buehler says he opposed that plan because the revenue went to the Department of Environmental Quality rather than bolstering the state’s general fund.

He voted for the state’s Low Carbon Fuels Standard to reduce the intensity of carbon in fuel in 2015, and for a statewide plan to gradually abandon coal-generated electricity in 2016.

Public Employees Retirement System

Buehler says he would move the pension program’s \$25 billion in unfunded obligations to retirees to the top of his agenda.

“I won’t sign any new spending bills until I have a PERS reform bill on my desk,” he said. Reforms he would like to see would: cap annual payouts to future retirees at \$100,000 per year; require public employees to contribute to their retirement fund; and transition the pension plan to a 401(k) retirement plan.

PENDLETON

Hotel developer will get a second chance at airport lease

East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council will take another stab Tuesday at approving a 50-year lease to build a hotel at Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

The hotel is being proposed by Horse Valley LLC, a subsidiary of Makad Corp., a Vancouver, Washington, company that is also involved in the years-long development of a data center on Airport Road. Makad Corp. made an initial attempt at getting approval for the 75-room hotel lease in August, but the council declined to vote on the issue to give staff time to clarify the terms of the lease.

Instead of a traditional land lease, the city would collect a percentage of the

hotel’s gross revenue starting in 2021, ranging from 0.25 percent during the first year to 2 percent starting in 2028.

In a financial analysis prepared by Makad Corp., the company anticipates the city’s revenue from the deal would grow from \$5,916 in 2021 to \$41,021 in 2028. City Manager Robb Corbett has estimated that a standard land lease would generate only \$2,100 per year for the city.

According to the contract in the agenda packet, Makad Corp. would use the percentage method for the first 30 years of the lease before switching to a rent plan based on “fair market rental value.”

The lease also requires the company to build a new

parking lot because the proposed site of the hotel rests on the current long-term parking lot for the airport.

In exchange for its concessions, Makad Corp. wants an incentive package that includes in-kind civil and environmental engineering work, water and sewer connection fee waivers, and up to 50 percent permit fee reduction. Not including the waiver and discount, Corbett estimates the incentive package is worth about \$57,500.

Makad Corp.’s history of development in Eastern Oregon is a mixed bag.

Although Makad developed the River Lodge and Grill in Boardman, its plans to build an ethanol plant and a fertilizer plant at the Port of Morrow in the early 2000s never got off the ground.

Another port project — a 31-megawatt power plant — operated for a short time before it got wrapped up in a lawsuit with a partnering company. It was eventually shuttered and sold.

And after announcing a new data center on Airport Road in 2015, Makad Corp. and its subsidiary, CyDat Industries, haven’t broken ground on the project as company officials say they’re still looking at power sources and financing.

The council will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

County approves \$235K settlement in whistleblower lawsuit

PORTLAND (AP) — Clackamas County has agreed to a \$235,000 settlement with a sheriff’s office sergeant, who claimed the department retaliated against him after he proposed an investigation into a

veteran detective.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports county commissioners approved the payout in the lawsuit by Sgt. Matt Swanson Thursday.

Swanson says he was the subject of retaliation and harassment after he proposed an internal affairs investigation into Detective Jeff Green, who was ignoring sexual assault and child abuse cases.

An investigation by the county later supported Swanson’s claims.

Swanson says in a statement that the decision has reinforced his belief that law enforcement is not above the law.

Board Chairman Jim Bernard declined to comment on the settlement.

Sheriff Craig Roberts did not respond to an email seeking comment.

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