

DEBATE: Pendleton’s Dazon Sigo asks about native history education

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community herself, persisted, pressing her question a third time.

“What would you as governor do to make schools safe for LGBTQ?” she said, sternly.

Brown said she wants to make sure schools have funding for counselors, specifically ones who mirror the backgrounds and experiences of the students they serve. She wants to enforce state policy meant to keep students safe from bullying and continue meeting with school superintendents regularly to make sure the policy is implemented.

Buehler said the governor can stand on a soapbox and let the public know bullying isn’t right. He said he would implement a hotline to report bullying directly to the governor’s office so the state’s leader would know first-hand how big of an issue it is.

Starnes answered as well, noting his time in schools and then told Lawrence, “I would hire you.”

After the hourlong televised debate, Lawrence said she took exception to Buehler’s responses to her. She said it seemed like Buehler was unprepared for the question, and it made her wonder how seriously he took her concern.

“Buehler did not even use the term LGBT,” she said.

The scene — lasting several minutes — was a change in tone from an otherwise relatively cordial political debate. Brown, Buehler and Starnes sat on stools side by side under stage lights at the north Portland high school.

The students picked from across the state for the debate stepped to the lectern one at a time. The candidates each

had a minute to answer, a time cut in half near the end to squeeze in more questions. The debate was organized by Children First For Oregon, KOIN 6, and the Pamplin Media Group.

The youthful questioners peppered the candidates with carefully scripted and forcefully presented questions. Many touched campaign hot topics: homelessness, health care, education, gun control. Others, like Lawrence’s, weren’t.

Genesis Gomez, 12, of Portland, asked how the candidates would protect farm workers like those in her family from being exposed to harmful chemicals. Brown answered, in part, by declaring again her opposition to repealing the state’s sanctuary law, Measure 105. Her statement drew the only crowd applause of the night to an answer.

Dazon Sigo, 17, asked why schools like his in Pendleton don’t do a better job of teaching about native history and culture.

Throughout, the candidates largely answered the questions without bickering, though Buehler several times blamed state problems on Brown’s leadership. Brown largely ignored the jibes, but did fire back at one point that action means more than words.

A few times, the two were afforded rebuttals to address direct attacks.

While addressing gun control, Buehler said he would support a ban on bump stocks, raising the minimum age to purchase a firearm to 21, and requiring a three-day waiting period to buy a handgun.

Brown asked for a rebuttal to point out Buehler’s opposition to the “red flag” legislation, which allows authorities to take guns

from people who could be harmful to themselves or others. The law also bars them from buying a gun.

Buehler said the legislation was flawed because it didn’t mandate health care for would-be purchasers or allow them to defend their Second Amendment right in court.

While answering Sigo’s question about Native American education, Buehler said Brown was to blame for any gaps because she can’t stand up to special interest groups.

Brown shot back, tout-ing an increase in funding and a modest hike in graduation rates, while admitting there was more work to be done.

The students had the opportunity to address the field of candidates, or narrow it to Brown and Buehler. But Starnes would not be deterred, and got in a short, and often innovative, answer nearly every time.

When asked how the candidates would address climate change, he said he would work to build an electric highway to charge vehicles as they drive. He said he would impose a tax on vacant development to fund mental health. He said he would also tax advertising to get money for mental health.

Brown and Buehler will face off again at a debate scheduled for Thursday night in Medford, and then next week in Portland. Starnes has been excluded from those events.

Reporter Aubrey Wieber: aubrey@saalemreporter.com or 503-375-1251. He is a reporter for Salem Reporter working with the Oregon Capital Bureau, a collaboration of the Pamplin Media Group, EO Media Group, and Salem Reporter.

GIVENS: Won’t campaign, seek donations

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primary race, such as letters supporting him. They also reappropriated some of his old campaign signs to include the words “write in.”

Givens allowed the reporters to take over his re-election campaign’s Facebook page. He said he is not an administrator of the page, nor is his wife, Anne Givens.

Givens added he has no intention of reopening an account at ORESTAR, the Oregon Secretary of State’s public website for campaign finance activity, nor does he plan to stump or seek donations. If people ask about the write-in effort, he said, he talks about it and shares some of the campaign’s Facebook posts on his own Facebook page.

Givens during a radio interview Thursday did not mention the write-in campaign but spoke about what he would do after he left the

board. Shafer said he heard that interview, and it seemed Givens was looking forward to visiting family and taking care of his farm.

Then the Facebook posts about the write-in campaign popped up Friday, Shafer said, and soon people told him they were not pleased with seeing the posts in their social media news feeds.

“I’m just surprised he’s going this route now,” Shafer said.

Although Shafer garnered a majority of voters in the primary, his name appears on the November ballot. Umatilla County elections manager Kim Lindell said that’s because the county charter specifies voters elect commissioners in November. Likewise, Milton-Freewater requires elections for council in November, while city council candidates in Hermiston and Pendleton can win outright in primaries,

“Just depends on the charter,” she said.

Givens said he wants voters to understand they have a choice in the general election, that’s why ballots provide a line to write in the name of a candidate. He said if the campaign proves successful, he would gladly serve again. He ran for the position, after all, he said, and not serving would be an insult to the people who appreciated his work as commissioner.

Lindell said success with a write-in campaign in a county-wide race is possible, but not probable. And Givens acknowledged he is up against an anti-incumbent sentiment. He said some voters told him they want change, even if they did not describe what that means.

“The people spoke in May,” Shafer said. “Now they’re going to get the chance to speak in November.”

HOTEL: Incentives still up for debate

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would receive a similar incentive package to the one the council agreed to when the company announced a data center on Airport Road in 2015 — 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.

At the August meeting, Councilor Dale Primmer asked why the revenue sharing agreement didn’t extend through the life of the lease and expressed concern that Makad Corp. was “front-loading” the incentive package without enough accountability measures.

This line of question-



Conceptual drawing submitted by city of Pendleton

ing seemed to elicit irritation from company CEO Elie Makad, who said the hotel project wasn’t a “big deal” for Makad Corp. officials and they could move on from it. He later apologized to the council.

While Makad Corp. was involved in the development

of the River Lodge & Grill in Boardman, the company’s other projects at the Port of Morrow either never came to fruition or ran into a lawsuit before being sold.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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