

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Walden for Congress

The times appear to be changing in Oregon’s 2nd District. Democratic candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner has raised nearly a million dollars in her campaign for Congress after winning a primary against more than a handful of fellow credible challengers. She has mounted a tour of the massive district, criss-crossing from the southwestern forests to increasingly metropolitan Bend to our northeastern corner time and again to get her message out. Meanwhile U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, the Republican who has held the seat for two decades, has found his leadership openly and aggressively questioned in the formerly friendly public forums of a securely red district. Pockets of discontent toward the Trump administration, and specifically its attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act with Walden’s support, have fueled animosity at public forums. Walden, citing a coordinated effort to shout him down and harass his staff at town halls, has for the most part made his visits to the district private, choosing closed-door meetings with officials and constituents. The question to voters is whether the changing times call for a new representative in Congress. We believe Walden remains the most effective and in-tune candidate for the job and endorse him for an 11th term. McLeod-Skinner is an energizing

presence, and should be given full credit for putting the pressure on Walden. She’s the kind of Democrat that makes sense in rural Oregon, focused on issues over identity with an understanding that the citizens of the 2nd District are a unique breed. She’s moderate on issues like gun control, land management and the federal deficit, which make her more progressive points on health care resonate all the more. And we should note, we agree that repealing the Affordable Care Act without a plan to replace it would have hurt many people in the district. We’re glad McLeod-Skinner has made that point, and has been a voice of accountability for Walden. She has also rightfully pointed out that economic recovery has come slowly in rural Oregon, and nearly half of the citizens are living more or less paycheck to paycheck. Unemployment may be low, but making a real living isn’t getting any easier. But even with these diagnoses, and despite a furious 18 months of research and outreach, we don’t believe McLeod-Skinner has as deep a knowledge of the district or the same ability to represent it as Walden. Walden has earned a great amount of influence in Washington, D.C. He chairs the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the oldest and one of the most powerful. He has used



Rep. Greg Walden listens to testimony during an opioid roundtable at the Umatilla County Courthouse on Friday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

his connections to bring Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and FCC Chair Ajit Pai to the region to see first-hand our issues of trade, land management and communications. He has wielded his clout for big causes — like the opioid recovery package — and small ones — like a revisionary clause that allowed the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center to partner with BMCC. We mention the small ones only to affirm the point that Walden has remained deeply in touch with issues critical to our area. While he may have cut down on his time in front of the constituency at large, Walden has kept up his regular interaction with officials.

And even as the unfolding drama of the Trump administration attracts broad attention, Walden continues to get work done as he sounds the alarm on wildfire management. We believe his efforts in that field to be critical for Oregon’s future, and believe his focus on the impact of smoke is as crucial for us as it is in Southern Oregon. Just as the district is changing, the country is in flux. A Democratic takeover of Congress would curtail Walden’s influence in the Capitol. But it wouldn’t be Walden’s first time working from the minority position, and however the rest of the chips may fall we believe he is the best suited to bring our needs to Washington and bring results back to the 2nd District.

OTHER VIEWS

Midterm pickup chances rare but critical for GOP

It’s been noted a million times that Democrats need to pick up 23 seats to take control of the House of Representatives in next month’s midterm elections. Nearly all analysis has focused on how many seats Republicans might lose. Less noticed is the fact that the GOP will likely pick up a small number of seats in congressional districts that buck the predicted national trend by changing from Democrat to Republican. Any GOP pickups will probably be few and far between. But if the race for House control tightens in coming weeks, they could be critical.

The Republicans’ best chance to pick up a Democratic seat is in the sprawling, 27,000-square-mile 8th District of Minnesota. The district has been represented since 2013 by a Democrat, Rep. Rick Nolan. Nolan has had one of the more unusual careers in the House: He was first elected in 1974; served until 1980, when he chose not to run for re-election; took a 32-year break to pursue private business; and then ran for and won his old seat in 2012. Now, at age 74, he has decided to retire again.

Running for the Democrats — in Minnesota, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party — is Nolan’s former campaign manager, a former state house representative named Jim Radinovich. For the Republicans, there is Pete Stauber, a member of the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners.

Polling in September showed the race very close. But a recent *New York Times* poll found Stauber with a 15-point lead, 49 percent to 34 percent, with 13 percent undecided. Stauber led with men, with women, with voters who had a college degree and with those who didn’t.

The third player in the race, as in so many others, is Donald Trump. The district voted for Barack Obama twice, and then took a sharp turn toward Trump, who won by 16 points in 2016. Now, in the *Times* poll, the president’s job approval rating in the district is 54 percent. Trump has already jumped into the race, traveling to Duluth in June for a rally for Stauber and other Republicans.

“President Trump and his policies are more popular today than they were on



BYRON YORK
Comment

Election Day,” said a well-connected GOP strategist recently. “Best pickup opportunity in the country. We are going to win the seat.” Stauber embodies what he calls the “blue-collar, common-sense” spirit of the district. He went to college, Lake Superior State University, on a hockey scholarship and played for a few years with the minor league Adirondack Red Wings. He returned to Duluth and became a police officer, serving 22 years. He and his brothers also operate a local hockey equipment company.

Stauber got into politics when he ran for city council in the Duluth suburb of Hermantown, and after serving eight years, won a seat on the St. Louis County Commission. Last year, when it still appeared Rick Nolan would run for re-election, but after it was clear that the district had moved in a Trumpian direction, Stauber decided to take the big step of running for Congress.

The substance of the campaign is a classic mix of local and national issues. When, during a recent phone conversation, I asked Stauber about his platform, the first thing he said was, “I support iron ore mining, copper nickel mining, and Enbridge Line 3 replacement.” Mining is at the heart of the local economy, and Line 3 is an aging crude oil pipeline, first built in the 1960s, whose proposed replacement has set off a vigorous debate over its predicted environmental impact.

On health care, I asked Stauber if, had he been in the House in recent years, he would have voted to repeal and replace Obamacare. “Not necessarily,” he answered. “In order to repeal and replace, you have to have something better.” He pledged to seek solutions, like protections for people with pre-existing conditions, on which there is bipartisan agreement.

Put it all together, and Stauber appears to be in one of those rare spots where Republicans can play offense rather than defense. Perhaps a Republican win won’t matter in the scheme of things. But it’s also possible that, in a close race, it might make all the difference in the world.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



YOUR VIEWS

Reasons to vote McLeod-Skinner

Jamie McLeod-Skinner will vote to require health insurers to cover pre-existing medical conditions at an affordable rate. (Walden votes against requiring coverage for pre-existing conditions.) Jamie McLeod-Skinner will vote to allow our government to negotiate lower drug prices. (Walden votes not to allow that, and is the largest recipient of Big Pharmaceutical political donations in the House — coincidence?) Jamie McLeod-Skinner listens to our concerns and will represent those concerns in D.C. (Walden is just showing up now that it’s election time.) Please join me in voting for Jamie McLeod-Skinner.

Mary Hallman
Pendleton

Measure 102 will help hardworking people

Throughout Eastern Oregon, rents and housing costs have skyrocketed and people are struggling to afford their homes. From Umatilla County to Malheur County, we are seeing and feeling this strain. Working hard should mean you can afford to put a roof over your head. But today, you can work full time, earn an average salary and still not afford to even rent a one-bedroom apartment in many of our communities. As an Oregon AFSCME member, I

know too many hardworking people who are struggling just to keep their heads above water. We need to make sure that hardworking people can take care of their families. This November, Oregon voters have the opportunity to make it easier for their communities to build and preserve affordable homes by voting “yes” on Measure 102. Measure 102 would lift the ban on local governments working with nonprofits and local businesses to build affordable housing with bond funds. This means that bond dollars will go further because they can leverage other funding sources (like low-income housing tax credits) and be implemented with partners that have the most experience in building, owning, and operating affordable housing. Many small cities throughout the state don’t have the capacity to execute an affordable housing bond program without this change. While stretching public dollars in bigger cities, passing Measure 102 will open the door to more affordable housing across the state in places it wasn’t available before. The Oregon Legislature referred this amendment to voters with strong bipartisan support. Oregon’s strong system of accountability for affordable housing will ensure low income residents are being properly served and that housing built with bond dollars is available and affordable for decades to come. Please join me in voting Yes on 102.

Greg Clouser
Umatilla

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