

Money: First battle of Oregon Secretary of State race

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corporations to \$2,000 per election, meaning she would take that amount from such groups in both the May primary and November general election. Williamson also said she'll reject any contributions from companies that don't do business in Oregon.

State Sen. Mark Hass

Hass on Thursday said he'd be putting forth a far more stringent proposal: asking all candidates to agree to limit donations to \$250 per contributor.

The longtime lawmaker, who has seen his share of large checks from corporate and institutional supporters over the years, said he's seeking to set an example in the current race.

"All the candidates — Democrats included, and maybe especially — have had to resort to taking these large contributions to survive in a system that has no rules," Hass said. "Let's set some rules."

Jamie McLeod-Skinner

McLeod-Skinner, who last year challenged U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, wants the candidates to adhere to federal contribution rules. Those set a range of limits on what different entities can donate to candidates — for instance, a \$2,800 limit per election from individuals and a \$5,000 limit per election from many PACs and party committees.

"In absence of Oregon legislation on campaign contribution limits, my proposal is to use the federal limits," said McLeod-Skinner. "Last year, I didn't take corporate PAC or fossil fuel money, and my proposal is to do that as well."

None of the three campaigns had posed their suggestions to their opponents as of Thursday morning. Hass and Williamson said they were preparing to unveil their ideas in coming days. A fourth candidate for the Democratic nomination, Ryan Wruck, has not filed a candidate committee. He said he is uncertain whether he will raise or spend enough to meet the \$750 threshold for doing so.

Williamson's proposal is similar to controls on corporate contributions in Washington state elections, which



OPB Photo/Bradley W. Parks, File
House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland, signals her vote during the 2019 legislative session at the Capitol in Salem.

are also set at \$2,000 per election. Washington also imposes limits on how much individuals, PACs and unions can give.

"It's time to loosen the grip big corporations and their political action committees have on our politics and public policy," Williamson's statement said. "I think one significant step towards doing that is to limit the amount of money they can contribute to campaigns."

Asked whether the limits apply to nonprofit corporations, Williamson's campaign initially said yes. But the campaign clarified Thursday that it had only meant that statement to apply to 501(c)3 organizations — not membership-supported groups such as labor unions or the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association that have been top supporters of Williamson's in the past. Many of those groups are also registered nonprofits.

The campaign has since updated its proposal to refer to "for-profit corporations."

"Representative Williamson believes that professional organizations, membership associations, unions and small donor political action committees play a critical role in empowering thousands of individual Oregonians who otherwise would not have a voice in our current political climate," campaign spokesperson Ruby LaBrusciano-Carris said.

Told of Williamson's proposal, McLeod-Skinner said it sounded like it had "a lot of loopholes."

Williamson has tapped generous donations from corporations in past races.

In her 2018 re-election bid, she accepted \$4,000 from Nike. That money would theoretically fall in line with Williamson's proposal in the cur-

rent race, since the footwear giant split the money between two checks — one before the primary and another before the general election. But Williamson also accepted \$1,000 from Nike in October 2017 that could count toward her 2018 campaign. Williamson did not face an opponent in either election last year.

In past races, Williamson has leaned more heavily on Nike. Records show that the company contributed nearly \$10,000 to Williamson's 2016 re-election bid, in which she faced only token opposition.

Many of Hass' top donors have been corporations over his years in the Senate. Records show Nike, which sits just north of his district, has given Hass more than \$13,000 since he won his last race in 2016.

Hass has also seen consistent support from Comcast and from grocery chains such as Safeway and Kroger. All of those companies took interest in a new "corporate activities tax" that Hass was key in crafting and which lawmakers passed this year.

Hass, who has long voiced support for stricter campaign finance rules, said such big checks are the opposite of what Oregon politics need.

"This is the Wild West," he said. "If you're in the Wild West, you've got to wrestle with rattlesnakes sometimes. This is what we've got to end."

Hass had debated in past days what contribution limits would be appropriate for the secretary of state race, and wound up settling on an extremely restrictive formula for a statewide race. He argues a \$250 limit on all contributions would change the tenor of the race for the better.

"I think it makes it more



OPB Photo/Bradley W. Parks, File
Former congressional candidate Jamie McCleod-Skinner waits for the start of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's inaugural address at the state Capitol in Salem.



OPB Photo/Bradley W. Parks, File
State Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, in the Oregon Senate earlier this year in Salem.

honest. I think it forces us to take our message to the streets, to the people," Hass said. "That's where these races need to go. We've just got too many huge contributors that are drowning out voices."

The proposed limit would be stricter than \$500-per-donor caps approved by Multnomah County and Portland voters in recent years — regulations that have yet to be approved by the courts. And Hass' proposal would go much further than a campaign finance bill that failed in this year's legislative session.

So far, Hass has not been constrained by the limits he's now proposing. In the last month and a half, his candidate committee has reported checks of between \$1,000 and \$2,500 from healthcare-related groups, some of his Senate colleagues and others.

Hass acknowledged an oft-mentioned side effect that can come along with strict campaign finance rules: They can drive well-ruled interests to create their own "independent expenditure" campaigns to tout a favored candidate. The senator said Thursday he'd call on all candidates to

"disavow" any such efforts if they agreed to his idea.

"It's the one fly in the ointment here," he said. "It's a little bit risky."

Hass also plans to propose a series of debates statewide, something McLeod-Skinner had previously supported.

It appeared unlikely Thursday that candidates would find common ground in their various proposals. For her part, Williamson said she would stick to her plan.

"Regardless of what the other candidates for secretary of state may choose to do, Jennifer Williamson has decided to voluntarily limit big corporate money in her campaign," LaBrusciano-Carris wrote. She noted that Williamson "needs the resources to reach out to and engage nearly a million Democratic primary voters and 2.8 million total registered voters across our state."

She also said the campaign was unwilling to turn down donations from PACs that steer donations from "small donors" to candidates.

Oregon's loose campaign finance regulations have long been a target for reformers, and they drew renewed criticism last year during a gubernatorial campaign that shattered fundraising records.

RUNDOWN OF PROPOSALS

The top Democratic candidates running for Oregon secretary of state next year are each proposing limits to campaign finance contributions, even though state law requires none. The problem: They don't agree on what those limits should be. Here's a rundown of the proposals.

State Rep. Jennifer Williamson

For-profit corporations or political action committees run by for-profit corporations limited to \$2,000 per election. No donations by companies that don't do business in Oregon. No limits on other donations, including money from individuals, labor unions, or member associations.

State Sen. Mark Hass
All donors limited to giving no more than \$250 to candidates.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner
Candidates abide by federal election rules, which set contribution limits of \$2,800 per election for individual donors and \$5,000 per election for many political committees.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Oregon is one of just five states to impose no limits on the money that can be given in campaigns. The lax rules derive from a 1997 state Supreme Court opinion that found such limits would violate the state's constitutional protections on speech.

Campaign finance advocates are hoping to test that concept in a case that's scheduled to be heard by the court in coming months. No matter the outcome there, voters will have their say.

Lawmakers this year passed Senate Joint Resolution 18, which will allow voters to decide in November 2020 whether to amend the state constitution to allow campaign finance limits. If the measure passes, it would likely fall to lawmakers to decide what those limits could be.

"The real issue here is getting big money out of politics," said Hass, a sponsor of SJR 18. "It's not selectively raising big money from this group and not that group."

Opera: 'He absolutely drove us nuts playing Gilbert and Sullivan'

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Chorus, performing with the group until cardiac arrest took his life on Oct. 8. Phil found his brother deceased when he went to pick him up for choir practice. Besides heart problems, Quade struggled with blood cancer and diabetes, say family members.

Not that he talked much about his health.

Phil Winter said his brother lived his life exactly as he wanted. During Quade's boyhood, he regularly vexed his father, Melvin Winter, with his theater ambitions. Melvin, a local car dealer and former Pendleton mayor, was a no-nonsense, "pull-yourself-

up-by-the-bootstraps kind of guy" who wanted his four sons to go into business.

"Quade was always different," Phil said. "He never quite fit the mold."

The introspective and independent Quade had no interest in sports or business, though he treasured his time as a Boy Scout and enjoyed science.

"He wasn't just a music nerd," Phil said. "He loved science and he was a real Jules Verne fan."

His family adapted to his quirky ways.

"We learned to let Quade be Quade," he said.

Joyce Hoffman taught Quade in French class at PHS

and led a group to France in which he was the only boy with 19 girls.

"He assured me he'd be fine with that," Hoffman said with a grin.

She remembers Quade as a nice, quiet, average student who stayed off the radar except for acting. He has no official yearbook photo in his junior and senior yearbooks.

Phil's wife, Boone Winter, met Quade in eighth grade. She remembers the year he ran for school treasurer. His signs read, "E. Quade Winter. Vote for me and I'll tell you what the E stands for."

E stands for Edward, but save for his sister Liz Nase who refers to him as "Eddy,"

everyone else calls him Quade. Quade, Phil said, was his grandmother's maiden name.

Those who knew Winter will miss his humor.

"He was easy to be around," Boone said. "He had a way with words."

"His sense of humor was very dry," said Bill Mayclin, who directs the Pendleton Men's Chorus. "He was so funny."

During one Men's Chorus concert, Winter sang his own comic opera composition called "The Audition." The song describes the gritty, terrifying process of auditioning for an opera role and includes this phrase:

"Your accompanist grins as the music begins,

And it's clear that he's totally blotto.

You are simply aghast cause he's playing too fast

In a key that would kill a castrato."

Mayclin remembers seeing Winter as a young man singing a lead role in a Czech opera called "Jenufa" in Portland in 1996. Winter, who had sung the part before, had been asked to step in at the last minute after the original singer had to drop out. Mayclin, who directed the PHS choir at the time, leaned over and proudly told his friends, "That guy's from Pendleton."

After Winter's death, the

family gifted Mayclin with boxes and boxes of Winter's music CDs and sheet music, many of his own arrangements and original compositions.

"There are 26 banker boxes — over 300 CDs of opera and musical theater and 21 boxes of opera scores," Mayclin said.

Mayclin said it may take years to go through them all, but "they're kind of precious. This stuff just can't be tossed out."

There will be no memorial service at Winter's request. The guys in the Pendleton Men's Chorus, however, plan to assemble at the Prodigal Son to raise a glass in his honor.

High-speed: EOT to extend fiber optic to Athena by the end of the year

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population 2,230 — the development made more financial sense.

While all three cities struggle with internet speed and consistency issues, Spurgeon argued that Weston had it the worst.

Spurgeon said Weston's geography made it difficult for many households to get reliable wireless internet, while the DSL available often chugs along at 1 megabit per second. In comparison, EOT is planning to offer Weston 100 megabits per second.

At an Energy and Commerce Committee hearing in September about the inaccuracies of the FCC's broadband coverage map, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., relayed

a conversation he had with Spurgeon where she called Weston's internet "dial-up, just without the modem noise."

Franell thought it was a fitting comparison, even as Weston's DSL service is slightly faster than the days of America Online.

But 1 megabit is hardly compatible with modern internet speeds. Franell said even basic internet functions like email are rendered slow with those kinds of speeds considering all the pictures and graphics that now accompany them.

Spurgeon anticipated that EOT's service would not only improve the way the city government functions, but could be a boost to some of the organizations that call Weston home,

like PARC Resources, a consulting agency for rural communities.

Laura Prado, PARC's client services manager, said whether it's email, document sharing or video conferencing, her organization conducts a lot of its business online.

That can be a problem in Weston, especially on a deadline. Prado said she can often get faster internet speeds at her home in Milton-Freewater than in the office.

"It's a noticeable difference," she said.

Franell said EOT's investment in Athena, Weston and Adams won't end with infrastructure.

The company is planning a digital transformation program to give residents a better idea of what they can

do with their strengthened internet connection.

He said the company is currently distributing a survey to get a sense of what locals use the internet for and what they want to do with it in the future.

Based on their responses, Franell said EOT could help coordinate classes on topics like e-commerce, telehealth and distance learning.

Franell said broadband could not only be used as an economic development tool to attract businesses, but also keep these small towns as viable communities.

Citing a study done by the Strategic Networks Group, Franell said 45% of households would move for broadband service, a number that jumps up to 65% for households 35 and younger.

"It's not about convenience," he said. "It's about survivability."

Internet on the reservation

Only a few miles away from Athena, Weston and Adams, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are planning their own broadband network.

Ryan DeGroff, an economic planner for the CTUIR, said the tribes are planning the project in three phases.

The first would create a fiber loop between the CTUIR's government facilities and tribal enterprises like Wildhorse Resort and Casino. The second phase would connect the reservation to Pendleton's fiber infrastructure.

The final phase would see the tribes becoming its own internet service provider for residential customers living on the reservation.

DeGroff cautioned that the plan was still in its early stages, and even if all phases came to pass, there still might be some remote parts of the reservation that might not get the service.

At this point, DeGroff said the CTUIR is conducting a survey to get a sense of where internet speeds are across the reservation. Anecdotally, even some locations in Mission are experiencing slow and spotty internet service.

DeGroff said the project is dependent on obtaining funding through grants and other sources, so there isn't a definitive timeline for it yet.