

Candidates for Congress aren't waiting for court's green light

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Lori Chavez-DeRemer was 150 miles from home on Thursday, Nov. 11, marking Veterans Day in Bend and Redmond.

"I'm grateful to be over in Central Oregon to honor America's heroes," Chavez-DeRemer said. "I thought it was important that if I am running for Congress that it would be an honor to be there to honor our veterans."

The former mayor of Happy Valley in Clackamas County and stalwart conservative is among potential candidates who aren't waiting for the Oregon Supreme Court to rule for or against new political districts approved by the Legislature in late September and targeted with Republican-backed lawsuits last month.

Chavez-DeRemer announced she would run for the 5th Congressional District seat held by U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby, since the 2012 election. When redistricting pivoted the district to the east and over the Cascades, Chavez-DeRemer pivoted with it.

"Really, the only difference is the demographics," Chavez-DeRemer said. "It's a new chapter. The goals are the same for me — make the community whole."

Less than 15 minutes away from the Redmond event, Democrat Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Crooked River Ranch is planning her own campaign against Schrader.

But where Chavez-DeRemer is a law-and-order Republican who finds Schrader too liberal, McLeod-Skinner is a Democrat who sees Schrader as too cozy with Republicans, siding with them on pharmaceutical price controls and limiting President Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan.

Next door is the proposed 6th Congressional District awarded Oregon because of its 10% jump in population over the past decade. As an open seat with no incumbent, it's a once in a generation chance for politicians to get in at the beginning and win jobs that can last for decades.

Under the redistricting

plan approved by the Legislature and Gov. Kate Brown, the 6th District would include all or parts of Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Clackamas and Washington counties.

Former Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith declared her candidacy for the seat. Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, said last week that she was running for the seat too.

A wrinkle shared by Chavez-DeRemer, McLeod-Skinner, Smith and Salinas: None live in the districts where they plan to run.

State lawmakers have to be a resident of their district — one of the main reasons most candidates for the Legislature are waiting for a decision from the Oregon Supreme Court that could order further revisions.

That's not a problem for candidates for congress. The U.S. Constitution specifies that U.S. House members do not have to reside in their districts, just the state they will represent. While most end up living where they are elected, it's not uncommon for candidates to run, then move.

Schrader considered the option until last week, saying that he was deciding whether to run in the 5th District, with the numeral that makes him the incumbent. Or the 6th District, where voters would likely be more familiar with him. His home in Canby is in the far western edge of the new 5th District.

In the end, Schrader opted to stick with the 5th, even though it now included a swath that crossed the Cascades in Bend, Redmond and Sunriver in Deschutes County.

"It's going to be tough," Schrader said told Oregon Public Broadcasting on Nov. 6. "I've lost half of the folks I used to represent — over half." Schrader said the race will be an "opportunity" to win over new voters.

Schrader's 2018 general election foe, Republican Amy Ryan Courser, had filed for a rematch against Schrader. When the new district maps came out, her house was in the new 6th District. On Nov. 1, she revised her statement with the Federal Elections Commission to switch from the 5th to the 6th.

Blumenauer: Feds must do more to prepare for climate disasters

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

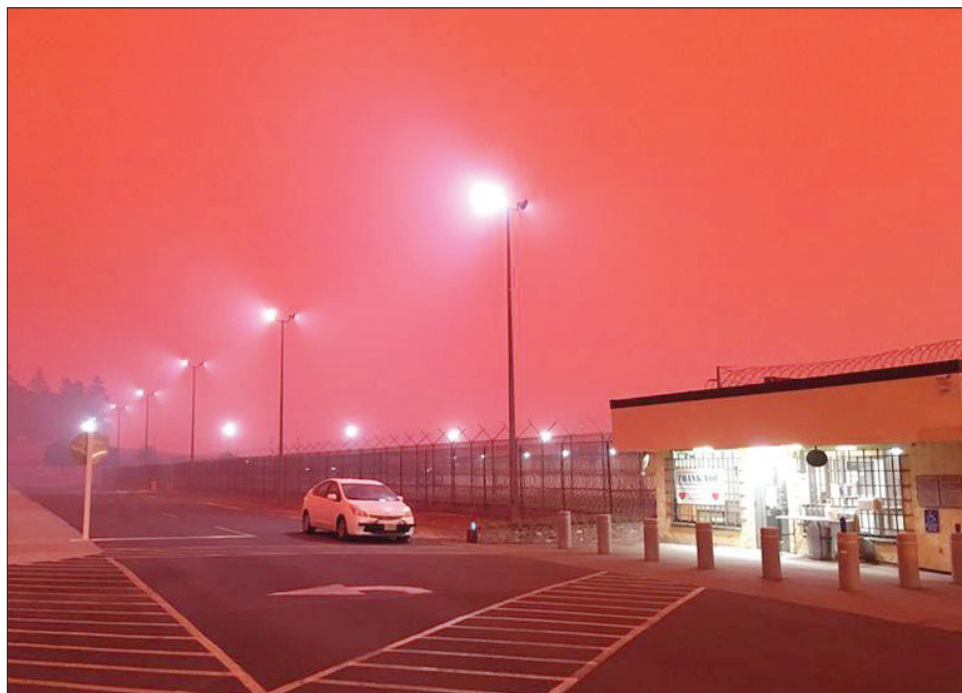
WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, fresh from a global climate-change conference in Scotland, said the federal government will have to do more to avert the natural disasters posed by worsening wildfires, floods and heat waves.

Blumenauer said in an era of climate change, people who lose their homes to wildfires and floods will have to rebuild under more stringent requirements — or even rebuild elsewhere — to mitigate the possibility of future disasters.

"We understand we are not going to be able to guarantee everybody in areas that flood or are prone to fire, in the same way we have higher standards for earthquakes," the Oregon Democrat told reporters Monday, Nov. 15, in Portland. "People are going to have to make these adjustments because we cannot afford to be able to pick up the pieces for people who are behaving recklessly."

He did so as he unveiled a report listing priorities and principles for preparedness and mitigation of disasters fueled by climate change, such as the 2020 Labor Day wildfires in Oregon and the four-day heat wave in June, when 100-degree-plus temperatures in the Northwest killed hundreds, many of them in Portland.

Blumenauer spoke as President Joe Biden signed



Oregon Department of Corrections/Contributed Photo

The Oregon State Correctional Institution near Salem on Sept. 8, 2020, was evacuated because of wildfires. U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Oregon, is pushing governments to require people living in disaster-prone areas to adopt safety measures, such as defensible space and vegetation control.

legislation for \$1 trillion in spending on public works projects, including measures to alleviate the effects of climate change. He is a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which has authority over tax legislation.

"What we are doing is nibbling around the edges," he said. "The money we spend on disasters is the largest infrastructure program the federal government has. We are going to be spending far more in our response to disasters. We need to be more thoughtful in how we make those investments. We need to

make sure we are dealing with the disparities affecting low-income people and people of color."

He has worked on legislation to reshape the federal flood insurance program during his 25 years in the House.

"Since coming to Congress, I have continued to work toward common-sense reforms that prioritize mitigation and preparedness in the face of increased risk of disasters," he wrote in the introduction to his report.

"I have led the effort for flood insurance reform, improved disaster management, and thoughtful land

use to minimize risk and damage, all to save costs and prevent future loss."

Blumenauer, in responding to questions, said his goal was not to displace people already living in disaster-prone areas but to have governments require them to adopt safety measures, such as defensible space and vegetation control.

"We are not going to go in and throw people out of places they have lived for years," he said. "But the more you build in the flame zone, the more likely it is that you are going to have additional fires."

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