

## VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

## 'Tis the season: NE Oregon's political landscape begins to take shape

The season 'tis upon us. It seems to be here too soon. We're not talking about the fact that Enterprise has already decked the halls with wreaths and lights, or that we are bombarded with seasonal music when we visit Safeway. Well, we are, but there's another arrival as well: Eastern Oregon's political candidates. The primary is not until well after calving season, and just at the nexus of branding and turnout. It seems distant and almost unfathomably out of reach. Still, politics begins at home and we might as well peruse what's on the menu at this point. It might get our minds off other things.

Northeast Oregon's seasoned, tried and true representatives in Congress and in the Oregon Legislature seem to be stepping aside from their posts. Perhaps it's good to get fresh blood and new ideas, but it also somehow feels a little like abandonment. First Greg Walden became the 17th House Republican to not seek reelection in 2020. Then our representative in the Oregon House, Greg Barreto, stepped aside. No-one has expressed much interest Barreto's seat. But four have filed for Walden's.

Greg Walden has served since 1998, and in the current political climate, seems like a



Martin Falbisoner/Wikipedia Commons

U.S. Capitol Building, East side, Washington D.C.

well-tempered moderate. He understands his district and for whatever you think of his political tenor, generally has upheld the needs of the conservative majority of his constituents pretty well. Walden's seniority provided him — and us—with a responsible voice, serving as the chairman of the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Communication and Technology, and Subcommittee on Energy and Power. That seniority and experience will vanish with the congressional newcomer

who replaces him.

As of Nov. 19, there are four announced candidates to replace Walden. On the Democratic side there's John Holm of Medford, who seems to mostly have spent his career as a political strategist in Minnesota, as well as running comic book stores and regular bookstores, and Raz Mason of Klamath Falls, who ran for the same seat in 2018, finishing 6th of 7 Democratic candidates in the primary. Mason holds a master's degree from Harvard, is a Navy veteran, and has worked

as a long-haul truck driver. Democrats seem to have a long haul at this point to find a credible, competitive candidate. On the Republican side there's the somewhat familiar face of Cliff Bentz, and the less-familiar countenance of politically ambitious Jason Atkinson of Ashland. Atkinson, who has worked as the director of a ski school and a radio talk show host, entered the political arena in 1998, winning a seat in the Oregon House for District 51 (Jackson and Josephine Counties), and then successfully ran for the Oregon Senate from the same area. He ran for governor in 2006, and then was elected to the Oregon Senate from southern Oregon's District 2 in 2008. He declined to run for another term in 2012. Atkinson has two claims to fame. First, in 2008 while repairing a friend's bicycle, he took a small bag off the bike and casually dropped it on the floor. That prompted the 0.38 cal Derringer that was in the bag to fire, sending Atkinson to the hospital in serious condition. Secondly, he championed the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA), which was supported by local communities, governments, tribal groups, environmentalists, and fishermen, although viewed with suspicion by the Klamath tribe. The succes-

or, the Klamath Hydropower Settlement will spark the removal of four dams on the Klamath River next year. The other announced Republican candidate, Cliff Bentz, is far more familiar to many of us in background and reputation. He grew up on ranches in Drewsy and Fields. He holds a law degree from Lewis and Clark, with specialty in water rights, property rights and agricultural law. He served in the Oregon House representing District 60 beginning in 2008, until appointed to the Oregon Senate in 2010. Famously, or perhaps infamously, Bentz was one of the 11 Republican senators who vanished rather than provide a quorum for passage of Bill 2020, the infamous carbon cap and trade bill.

Will there be more U.S. House District 2 candidates? On the Republican side, Knute Buehler, Mike McLane, and Bend's Tim Knopp have been banded about as potential candidates. Democrats are more stoic, with Jamie McCleod Skinner, who came closer—though not very close—than any previous Democrat to defeating Walden in 2018, aiming for a run at Oregon's Secretary of State job. The filing deadline for Walden's seat is March 10. It's still only November. Stay tuned.

## Yes, race matters, nationwide, even in Wallowa County

Race—yes, it matters. And immigration too. If we think about it, we, as individuals, families, communities, and a nation are conflicted about both race and immigration, and always have been. This came to mind this week with news that White House advisor Stephen Miller was exposed as having advocated blatantly white nationalist literature. This is the same Miller who designed many of the president's border and overall immigration policies: the anti-Muslim travel bans, border policies on separating children and families, etc.

I say we are conflicted about immigration and race because most of us in this country trace ourselves—proudly—to immigrant forbears. My family arrived from Germany and Norway in the late 1800s and early 1900s. When I lived in California, many of my Mexican classmates and neighbors lived in ancestral places and houses, when they were part of Mexico! Anyone who can trace ancestry to African-American slaves has, along with the Mexican-Americans cited above—and many more in Arizona and New Mexico—been “American” in family much longer than I have. “Immigrant” is a conflicted term!

We are conflicted about color and race because white has not always been white enough. When Irish, Greek, and Italian immigrants came to America, most of them huddled in ethnic enclaves in Eastern cities, took jobs that proper white Americans did not want (sometimes jobs that had been done by slaves before our grueling Civil War). The promulgators of Manifest Destiny, like all but seven or eight of our 45 presidents, were “Anglo-Americans” who saw this country as the natural heir to the British Empire, the new arrow of Civilization.

Jewish immigrants have their own sad stories of not being white enough. In the run-up to WW II, in 1939, a ship with 937 refugees fleeing Nazi Germany landed in Havana, Cuba, where 28 passengers were allowed to disembark—The US



MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

and Canada then refused to allow any departures, and the ship returned to Europe, where the Holocaust was unfolding.

Subsequent American actions helped staunch the Nazi Anti-Semitic Aryan nationalist movement, and, in the process brought white Italian, Irish, Scandinavian, German and Jewish Americans together with Anglo-Americans and called them all white. Black troops served in a segregated military through that war; integration of the military occurred in 1948.

Majority society's attitudes about ethnicity are most conflicted when it comes to the original Americans—misnamed from the beginning, “Indians.” The Indians were ravaged by European diseases, and drastically reduced in population as the country moved west and appropriated Indian lands through wars, fraudulent treaties, and overwhelming numbers.

There were always partisans who acknowledged these takeovers with minor or major misgivings. Official policy—and the accepted attitude of most Americans—became one of “assimilation,” making Indians white. The most generous advocates for Indians thought their cultures interesting and worthy of holding in museums, but also thought that the only way to save them was to “kill the Indian and save the man” in boarding schools and through policies that would make Indians farmers, make them city dwellers, make them white.

The Indian population of the country has rebounded from a low of 237,000 in the 1890s to over five million today—a population intent on saving and advancing ancient languages and cultures. Maybe most telling is the number of white Americans who now proudly claim a half-Cherokee grandmother or some

other tie to the original Americans. Conflicted on ethnicity.

Not Stephen Miller. The new information about him follows an election and three years of rhetoric from the president and advisors that touches on—or settles squarely on—race. I believe that the election and support of this president is firmly rooted in race. Italian-Americans and Anglo-Americans, who once were divided by concepts of race, have made up and married and now fear the day when non-white Americans will be a majority in the country.

Yes, some religious conservatives look past anti-immigrant policies and continuing convictions of corrupt officials to the appointment of anti-abortion judges. And other traditional conservatives look past offensive remarks and actions to tax cuts and robust returns on investments. But the hard core of support for the current political regime is racial fear.

And that fear of becoming some kind of minority in “our own land” allows the likes of Stephen Miller to advocate racist policies in the White House and, importantly, engenders a quiet acquiescence to overt white nationalism and white supremacy among a large number of Americans.

In Wallowa County and majority white communities like ours, we support our Mexican, Thai, and Chinese restaurants, and hire Mexican crews from outside the area to sheetrock our homes and work in our fields, but fear the floodgates of new immigrants and the tilt of the nationwide racial balance.

In Wallowa County and majority white communities like ours across the country, we support our Mexican, Thai, and Chinese restaurants, and hire Mexican crews from outside the area to sheetrock our homes and work in our fields, but fear the floodgates of new immigrants and the tilt of the nationwide racial balance. But we're a nation of Indians and immigrants that has tilted many times; let's learn our true history and appreciate each other for who we are and what we bring to the nation today.

## LETTERS to the EDITOR

Letter to editor  
Dawson

Now that I've entered the next phase of life — being a grandmother, I feel a stronger sense of responsibility to our land, resources, and neighbor. I feel compelled to take some kind of action, even if just a letter to the editor.

In today's world, it often costs as much to repair something as it does to buy it new. Personally, that is upsetting to me but it also makes me more appreciative of recycling. Here in Wallowa County we are very fortunate to have a county with an excellent recycle center, a landfill for household waste, as well as a hazardous waste facility.

There are three landfill locations: Enterprise, Joseph, and Wallowa. All sites accept household garbage. Each facility has a website, so check it out!

The Enterprise landfill on Ant Flat Rd. is open Wed., Friday, Sat., and Sunday 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Their website lists acceptable “contributions”: <https://co.wallowa.or.us/public-works/solid-waste/ant-flat-landfill/>

They accept household garbage and many recyclables including scrap metal, wood waste, tv's and laptops.

The county Recycle Center on Fish Hatchery Road across from Wallowa County Nursery is open 7 days a week, 24 hrs/day. They accept: cans without labels, glass, cardboard, newspapers, magazines, most plastics (rinsed) and

other items.

The Household Hazardous Waste operation is located in Enterprise and available every first and third Wednesday between 10-noon by making an appointment (541-426-3332). Cell phones, batteries, yard and household chemicals are accepted here.

There will always be a need for our county services and responsible recycling. There is also tremendous value in the services offered by other organizations such as thrift stores and repair shops. Additionally, let's inspire to support companies that offer lifetime guarantees and free repairs and practice policies that promote a better tomorrow. Together we can make a difference and leave this world better for our grandchildren.

Leigh Dawson  
Joseph

Letter to Editor:  
Hathorn

Dear Sir:

Your article entitled “Enterprise ATV town hall draws fire” (Chieftain edition 11/13/19) reported that Dennis Burt who was quoted in that article, is a resident of Enterprise, OR.

Well, perhaps if Dennis lives in an Enterprise PO Box. But he doesn't. His actual residence is located (on Joseph Hwy, Joseph).

4 Pinochios for Dennis. I Pinochio for the Chieftain!

Scott Hathorn  
Joseph, OR.

## CORRECTIONS

In the article titled Enterprise ATV town hall draws few, (November 13 issue of the Chieftain) the photograph's caption incorrectly identified Enterprise City Council Member Larry

Christman as Bruce Bliven. In the same article, Dennis Burt was incorrectly noted as an Enterprise resident. Mr. Burt has a Joseph address. The Chieftain apologizes for these errors.

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P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828  
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.  
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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Publisher, Chris Rush, crush@eomediagroup.com

Reporter, Stephen Tool, steve@wallowa.com

Reporter, Bill Bradshaw, bbradshaw@wallowa.com

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