

# Morett challenges Evans for House District 20

Candidates sound off on important issues facing the nation, state of Oregon and Polk County

By Emily Mentzer

The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Salem resident Laura Morett (R) is challenging incumbent Paul Evans (D) to represent House District 20 in the Capitol.

Both candidates want improvements for Oregon including better education and thriving small businesses, but each has a different approach, experience and philosophy.

Evans got three bills passed in the short 2016 Legislative Session — none of them labeled as an emergency. One extended a sunset on a tax that helped stabilize housing for low-income people; one established a rural enterprise zone, allowing businesses such as wineries to expand more easily; and one was a referral bill, Measure 96, which will allow a percentage of Oregon Lottery dollars to go to veteran support programs.

Each of those bills were co-sponsored by a Republican, Evans said.

But there is much to do in the House, and Evans hopes to have another term to work on a few key items.

"In education, especially K-12 and community college/workforce development, finding a more stable base for resources," Evans said. "We invested a lot last session, but unless we can find a more stable means of continuing that investment, it will go away, and we really can't afford that."

Evans and other colleagues in the Legislature are working on bills to help small business, from buy local subsidies to rebates for small business working in a tourism district, to developing and funding micro grants.

Another area Evans would like to work on is resiliency and emergency manage-

## House District 20

**Who:** Laura Morett, of Salem (Republican)



Morett

**Age:** 47

**Current employment:** Morett Construction, co-owner, 28 years

**Education:** Cascade High School, studied at Liberty University

**Previous government experience:** None

**Campaign phone:** 503-967-4329

**Campaign website:** lauramorettfororegon.com

**Why are you running for office:** As a small business owner, I see our state constantly placing regulations and hardships on businesses.

As a mother of three and grandmother of two, I am not OK with Oregon being 46th in the nation for high school graduation rates. Finally, there is no accountability in our current government.

**What is the biggest single issue facing the U.S., the state of Oregon, and, more specifically, Polk County? How would you address it if elected?**

The biggest single issue facing the U.S. is the economy.

The biggest single issue facing Oregon is the economy, and the biggest issue in Polk County is also the economy. I want our region and our state to be a job-producing, economically thriving, business-friendly environment.

As your state representative from House District 20 I will: Provide more incentives to small businesses to start up and expand; reduce red tape for small businesses; provide tax incentives for small business expansion.

**Anything else you wish to note about the position you are seeking?**

It has been an honor and privilege to be welcomed by so many people throughout the district. As I go door-to-door talking with voters, I hear over and over again that a part of the solution to many issues — the economy, homelessness, education — are all rooted in the lack of an economy that is thriving.

This affirms my decision of last November to do something.

I was raised on a farm in Shaw, and I know the importance of hard work and supporting your neighbors. My father taught us that if there was a problem, grab your gloves, put on your boots and go fix it.

And this is the attitude I have and will take to the Legislature.

**Who:** Paul Evans, of Monmouth (incumbent, Democrat)

**Age:** 46

**Current employment:** Chemeketa Community College, four years, State of Oregon Legislature since 2015

**Education:** Oregon State University, master's; Western Oregon State College (University), bachelor's; Central High School.

**Previous government experience:** Oregon House of Representatives (2015-present); U.S. Air Force/Oregon Air National Guard (1992-2013); Central School District Board of Directors (2008-2011); Oregon Homeland Security Council (2008-2011); Senior Policy Advisory to Gov. Kulongoski (2007-2010); Mayor of Monmouth (1999-2002); Monmouth City Council (1989-1992)

**Campaign phone:** 971-273-0112

**Campaign website:** www.paulevans.org

**Why are you running for office:** I am running for re-election to build upon the work accomplished since 2015. We must develop sustainable funding for our schools and critical services. We must facilitate opportunities for small business. We must keep faith with our veterans. And we must renew our infrastructure. Proven leadership experience matters.

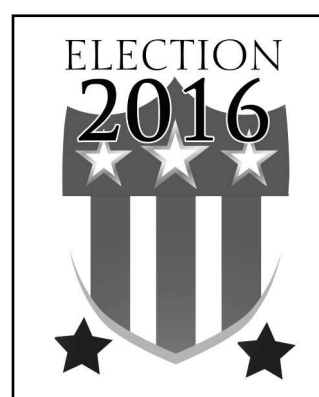
**What is the biggest single issue facing the U.S., the state of Oregon and, more specifically, Polk County? How would you address it if elected?**

Many issues demand our attention: debt management, education reform, economic restructuring for 21st century realities, national defense and workforce preparation to name a few. However, our greatest single issue demanding our attention is trust in our democratic structures and systems. Our citizens do not trust our own government. Progress will remain largely beyond our grasp unless/until we revitalize the relationship between the people and our leaders. Partisanship and perpetual campaigns have reduced our trust in the form and function of government. The era of destructive politics must end; our greatest priority must be to recast a more perfect Union.

**Anything else you wish to note about the position you are seeking?**

2016 is a time of testing. We must reclaim the ability to collaborate, compromise and cooperate in pursuit of meaningful progress. Compromise is not a sign of weakness; compromise among people of principle is the foundation for an enduring political union.

The biggest issue facing the nation — and state and county — is the lack of trust in government, Evans said.



"The United States of America has the capacity, because of our diversity, to chart the stars," Evans said. "But right now, we're not; we're fighting over the color of the drapes."

For example, the timber payment issue will not be resolved until America figures out what the role of federal lands is; good education policy will not be written until the federal government realizes that standardized testing is not, in and of itself, the long-term answer, Evans said.

"I'm not asking the people of this district to think I'm the greatest person on the planet, or the prettiest, or the most wonderful," Evans said. "I'm asking the people of this district to give me two more years to be their advocate, fighting for their needs."

Morett is ready to get to work in Salem for House District 20 and the state of Oregon. She has no grand plans of passing bills — quite the opposite.

"The first bill would be no more passing bills until we can untangle this crazy mess we got ourselves into," she said. "Especially in the short session; they passed so many bills without completely processing them."

Morett said she plans to go into the Legislature and fix things so they run the way they were intended rather than throwing more bills on top of current ones.

Three issues are close to

her heart: economy, education and small business.

When it comes to economy, Morett said she wants to look at the expenses vs. revenues in the state budget.

"Are we spending in areas maybe we shouldn't be spending, that maybe could be saved?" Morett said. "I want to increase our economy so money is poured back into the system, so people are spending. Money follows money."

Morett said she has spoken to many other small business owners about what the state government could do to help them.

"I want to make Oregon — and our district — a place where businesses want to come to, and one of the highest-paying, job-creating states, so people come to Oregon and they have jobs that are paying higher than any other state," she said.

Part of her plan is to repeal some bills that have made it difficult for small business, Morett said, such as mandatory paid sick leave. She also hopes to work on ways for small businesses to get loans and make it easier for them to hire more employees.

When it comes to education, Morett said she is appalled by the graduation rate in Oregon, ranking 46th in the nation.

"I don't want my grandkids to be 46th in anything, ever," she said. "It's not acceptable. I will do whatever I need to do to put us in the top 10. That's a top goal of mine."

Morett said, for starters, she wants to see smaller class sizes and to remove Common Core State Standards.

Along the lines of what she hopes to accomplish, Morett said she would like to serve on the business, education, judicial and human services committees.



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