

# Community

## BUEHLER

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Buehler won both races even though Republicans make up just 25 percent of his district's voters. Democrats have a plurality, at 36 percent, and non-affiliated voters outnumber Republicans too, at 31 percent. "I know how to put together a coalition of voters," Buehler said. "I wouldn't do this if I didn't think there was a clear path to victory." Buehler, whose older brother, Werner, served as general manager of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative from 2007-2017, believes Oregon voters are eager to elect a governor who will be a more vocal and active leader on issues where he contends Brown has fallen short. High on that list is Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System — PERS. In part because the system guaranteed thousands of public employees retirement benefits regardless of returns on the fund's investments, cities, counties and school districts are having to pay more as their share of PERS. Buehler said that growing PERS bill is forcing school districts to lay off teachers, among other effects, even as Oregon's income tax revenue has reached record highs. Although he acknowledges that aspects of PERS are contractually guaranteed — "a promise is a promise," he said — Buehler believes the Legislature, with support from the governor, can make changes that save up to \$1.2 billion per two-year budget cycle, money that could be available for the state's public schools.

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— **Knute Buehler, Republican candidate for governor**

Those changes include requiring all state and local government employees to contribute to their retirement benefits, enrolling all new employees in a 401(k)-style plan that, unlike PERS, does not include a defined benefit, and preventing employees from using vacation and sick leave to boost their final salary on which their retirement payments are based. "This has been ignored for way too long," Buehler said. "PERS is an area where the governor has failed to lead. We haven't seen Governor Brown use the bully pulpit of the governor's office on this issue." Buehler says he would "bring this issue to the top of the agenda." He vows that if elected he would not sign any bill including new spending for any purpose until "a PERS reform bill is on my desk." Buehler, a physician who grew up in Roseburg and was the first Rhodes Scholar from Oregon State University, also has ambitious plans for Oregon's public schools. He contends that even without cost-saving PERS reform, the state can afford to boost the K-12 budget by at least 15 percent for the 2019-21 and 2021-23 budget cycles. Buehler cited a revenue forecast released earlier Wednesday projecting that personal and corporate income tax collections will be high enough this year and

in 2019 to trigger the biggest tax refunds, under Oregon's "kicker" law, in more than a decade. Buehler emphasizes that although he advocates for the state to spend more on public schools, he would not support a "blank check" concept. Rather, he said, "those dollars must go to targeted outcomes." For instance, Buehler believes Oregon schools should have a longer academic year — at least the national standard of 180 days per year — and he proposes to use some of the extra state money to ensure school districts can accomplish that goal. He said Oregon's current average of 165 days means students who attend for 12 years have lost the equivalent of one full year of instruction compared with students in Washington state. Buehler also endorses a five-day school week, although he acknowledges that districts will retain the local authority to adopt four-day schedules, as is the case in the Baker School District. He also proposes to give each teacher a \$250 debit card each year to buy classroom supplies. In terms of a national and international issue, Buehler said he's troubled by what he calls the Trump administration's "trade war." "I'm not happy about the tariffs," Buehler said. "Oregon is a trade-dependent state." He said he agrees that the U.S. should "negotiate more vigorously" when making trade deals, but that "these kinds of trade wars never work, especially for a state

like Oregon." Among Buehler's top goals if he is elected would be to bridge what he calls Oregon's "rural/urban divide." He said the "hostility is almost palpable" in some rural areas he has visited. Still, Buehler said he also believes that "the hope is still there" that rural regions can benefit from the economic recovery that has been much more rapid, since the recession, in urban areas. "I'm optimistic about rural Oregon," Buehler said. "The world really needs and wants a lot of products that can be produced in rural Oregon." As examples he cited food, wood products and affordable, renewable sources of electricity. Buehler said that although he will vote for Measure 105, which would repeal Oregon's 1987 "sanctuary" law regarding illegal immigrants, he is not lobbying for the measure. He said his concern with the current law is that it breeds confusion and can lead to police in different parts of the state interpreting the law different ways. "I think (Measure 105) is a chance to clearly define what we do in Oregon," Buehler said. "I'll do that as governor whether it passes or not." Buehler said that although he supports Measure 105, he opposes racial profiling by police. He contends that a 2015 law signed by Brown deals with that potential problem, and it would not be affected if voters approve Measure 105. Buehler had an informal event Wednesday night at the Geiser Grand Hotel and visited a farm near Haines Thursday before traveling to Pendleton and Hermiston.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Rep. Findley plans coffee hour in Baker

State Rep. Lynn Findley, the Vale Republican whose district includes Baker County, has scheduled a public "coffee hour" event to meet constituents in Baker City on Friday, Sept. 14. The event is set for 9 a.m. at Mad Matilda's Coffee House, 1931 Court Ave. Findley was chosen by county commissioners in House District 60 in January 2018 to replace Cliff Bentz, who replaced Ted Ferrioli as state senator for this region. Findley is a member of the House Committee on Revenue and the House Committee on Energy and Environment. He can be reached by phone at 503-986-1460 or online at [www.oregonlegislature.gov/findley](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/findley). His email address is [Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov)

## HEART TO HEART

### Rotary Club helps keep polio at bay

Back in 1986 and prior to then, there were over 350,000 cases of polio worldwide each year. Rotary International decided to take on a massive immunization program to eradicate this crippling disease. As of June 2018, there have only been three endemic countries left that have not completely eradicated polio this year and they are Pakistan (three cases), Afghanistan (one case) and Nigeria (zero). A country is deemed free of the disease after three years and Nigeria is now approaching two years. Rotary International has spent close to a billion and a half dollars on this project. A new commitment of \$50 million plus \$100 million from the Gates Foundation for the years 2019 and 2020 will be spent. Each member of the Baker City Rotary Club has participated since 1986 by having a portion of their annual dues donated to the Rotary Polio Plus program. The Baker City Rotary Club wishes to express their thanks to all of the people and businesses that have supported their many fundraising projects over the years. This includes the businesses and individuals that monetarily participate in the placing of flags on the major holidays, the sale of buffalo burgers at Miners Jubilee and various other fundraising projects. Hopefully through the efforts of Rotary the final elimination worldwide of this terrible disease will be reported in the next couple of years by the efforts of Rotary International and all of its members.

**Gary McManus**  
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