#### **BUEHLER**

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When Kitzhaber secured the Democratic nomination, Buehler's allegiance — and contributions — went to Chris Dudley, the GOP nominee, who would go on to lose an expensive, close race to Kitzhaber in the general election.

2010 would be Buehler's last year on the political sidelines.

### Salem: First time not the

Former Deschutes County Sheriff Les Stiles recalled meeting with Buehler about once a month for breakfasts in Bend, where they talked about ideas, books and philosophy. During one meal in 2011, Buehler surprised Stiles with very practical questions about the mechanics of a political campaign. It became clear to Stiles that Buehler was planning to run for something.

"I asked him why," Stiles recalled. "Why would he want to expose himself to the agony of a campaign that is a brutal process and is very tough on a family?"

Stiles said Buehler told him part of being a Rhodes Scholar was a pledge to public service. Buehler felt it was time.

"That service is exclusively for the betterment of society and not the person seeking office," Stiles said "Knute believed that then and believes that now."

Buehler said he discussed his plans with his family, who swung behind the idea.

"Patty told me I needed to either stop complaining or start running," Buehler said.

Many aspiring politicians start locally, with the school board, city council, state Legislature or maybe Congress. Buehler decided to aim higher: secretary of state. He was drawn to the "watchdog" aspect of the job involving audits of agencies, and its possible roles in campaign finance and primary election reforms. He believed the incumbent, Kate Brown, wasn't impartial enough to referee disputes between Democrats, Republicans and others.

"The secretary of state should be far less partisan and more independent than Brown was in doing the job," Buehler said.

In late August 2011, Buehler announced he was running for secretary of state at a time when the Oregon economy was forcing tough decisions on residents and office-holders.

"This sounds like a perfect time to get into politics," Buehler said, half-joking.

It wasn't. In a year when President Barack Obama would win re-election, Repub-

### **BUEHLER ON BUEHLER:**

- What you wanted to be when you grew up: A Major League Baseball player
- Favorite baseball team growing up: Cincinnati Reds
- Favorite baseball player growing up:Tom Seaver
- Favorite football team growing up: Minnesota Vikings
- Favorite football player growing up: FranTarkenton.
- Favorite music: Classic rock
- Favorite musical acts: Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, the Eagles
- Favorite movies:The first "Rocky," "Star Wars, Episode IV
- A New Hope," "Ferris Bueller's Day Off"
  Favorite non-fiction book: "Dreamland:TheTrueTale of
- America's Opiate Epidemic" by Sam Quinones
   Favorite history book: "A Study of History" by Arnold
- Toynbee
   Next book to read: "Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class Is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust,
- Why That Is a Problem, and What to Do About It" by Richard Reeves
   Favorite TV show as a child: "Mutual of Omaha's Wild
- Favorite TV show as a child: "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom"
- Recent favorite TV show: "The Americans"Favorite foreign cuisine: Thai
- Food "guilty pleasure": Pepperoni pizza
- Specialty you cook for your family: Buttermilk blueberry pancakes
- Favorite drink: Crux pilsner
- •Where did you go for honeymoon: Cancun
- Favorite U.S. place: Maui
- Favorite foreign place: Rome
- Guilty pleasure: I love watching funny pet videos.

licans fared poorly across the board. Buehler would be no exception. Brown beat him 51 to 43 percent, and Buehler gained widespread name recognition for the first time.

## Bend: Moving on, moving over, moving up

Other one-shot candidates for statewide office — such as Dudley — disappear from the political arena. Buehler took another route.

Rep. Jason Conger, R-Bend, had shown moderate Republicans could win in the 54th House District representing Bend despite a Democratic voter registration majority. After two terms in the House, Conger decided to run for the U.S. Senate.

"Jason called me in the summer of 2013 and encouraged me to run as his replacement," Buehler said.

Stiles and House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, were among others who told Buehler he should run.

One problem: Buehler no longer lived in the 54th House District. Reapportionment after the 2010 census had moved the House district boundaries so Buehler was a resident of the 53rd House District, represented by veteran Rep. Gene Whisnant, R-Sunriver. Buehler moved and despite a Democratic voter registration advantage and allegations that he was a "carpetbagger" for moving, Buehler was elected to the House.

Asked by an Oregon State University alumni publication about his future, Buehler

laid out a decade-long plan. "I want to make a change,

Replacement

but I feel it takes that amount of time — at least 10 years — to build the relationships and work on legislation — to build that support and a coalition."

It was a timetable he would soon advance.

During the 2015 session, Buehler voted consistently with the Republican minority on tax and spending issues. He etched a reputation as a moderate by championing bills to allow pharmacies to issue on-demand birth control and to require insurance companies to cover a full year of refills for all contraceptives.

In early 2015, Kitzhaber resigned amid an influence peddling scandal. Under the state constitution, Kate Brown became governor. She would have to run in 2016 to fill out the rest of Kitzhaber's term. Buehler's name was frequently mentioned as a possible GOP candidate. Buehler said no, or at least, "not yet."

"I wasn't ready for the time commitment of a statewide campaign that would take me away from family and my medical practice," Buehler

Buehler instead ran for re-election. The booming population of Bend had brought in thousands of new voters, most of whom were not affiliated with either major party or registered as Democrats. Aided by \$1 million in fundraising, Buehler eked out a 4 percent margin of victory over Democrat

Gena Goodman-Campbell.

"I felt he misrepresented himself as a moderate considering what his voting record would be in 2017 and 2018,"

Goodman-Campbell said.

She pointed to Buehler's opposition to the Reproductive Health Equity Act, healthcare funding, and environmental issues as examples of issues where she believes Buehler backed conservative, Republican positions out of step with the values of district voters.

"He was not providing a strong voice for the priorities of our district, like affordable housing, because he was clearly angling for a higher office," she said.

Brown won election as governor and Buehler's name was again at the top of the list for 2018 when the governor would need to run for a four-year term of her own. This time, Buehler was in, starting to fundraise by early 2017 and announcing his candidacy in August. Nike CEO Phil Knight contributed \$500,000 to Buehler. Knight recently added another \$1 million to Buehler's campaign, the largest single donation to a statewide candidate by one individual in Oregon history.

Buehler quickly found himself under attack from the left and the right.

On the day in August 2017 that he announced his candidacy, the Kate Brown Committee, the governor's ongoing campaign arm, sent out an email from "Team Kate" before noon, calling for financial help in fighting Buehler.

"We won't lie; 2016 was a tough year for Democrats across the country," the message read. "But Oregonians stood up to the hatred and regressive policies of the Trumps-in-training in our state and elected Kate governor."

Meanwhile, conservatives lacerated Buehler as a RINO, or "Republican In Name Only." Anti-abortion groups openly shopped for an "anybody but Buehler" candidate to run to his right

in the primary.

Far-right conservatives split their vote among Bend businessman Sam Carpenter and retired naval aviator Greg Wooldridge. Buehler won the tight primary, but at a high cost, spending \$3.6 million that left him with less than \$200,000 the day after the election.

While he's once again bringing in major donations, Buehler finds himself up against Brown and her more than \$4 million in the bank. Analysts have forecast the race will blow past the record \$17.7 million spent in the Kitzhaber-Dudley race in 2010.

As his profile has risen, so have the perches from where his critics can attack his record. Writing recently in the opinion section of The Oregonian, Democratic Party of Oregon Executive Director Brad Martin called Buehler's bipartial shalp inconsistent.

"Buehler has often voted against bills that received support from both sides of the aisle," Martin wrote. "He turned down \$5.3 billion for a statewide transportation package, said 'no' to commonsense background checks for gun owners, and rejected bipartisan work to provide access to health insurance for every child in Oregon. Kudos to those Republicans who worked to improve our state, but Oregonians should be puzzled by why Knute Buehler would align himself with the most far-right members of his party."

Buehler said he has tried to make his own political path. He is a moderate — a moderate Republican. That is something he said the state needs when both chambers of the Legislature have Democratic majorities.

"I want to be that independent-minded candidate who rejects the narrow, partisan labels that divide us but don't define us," Buehler said.

The "divide us but don't define us" line is in nearly every campaign speech he has made. Buehler said its not just sloganeering.

"I define moderation as being open minded to other points of view, and willing and able to reach across the aisle to get things done," Buehler said. "As a pro-choice, pro-LGBTQ rights Republican, that is what I have done."

Buehler said he has been buffeted throughout his political career by those who feel he has to be with them all the time or he is against them. That, he says, is not how he works. A favorite Buehler metaphor — repeated often on the campaign trail — is that as a physician, he didn't ask patients what their politics were when treating their pain.

"I just want to hear what is bothering you and roll up my sleeves and try to solve the problem without a preconceived notion of what that solution should be," Buehler said.

One voter who is looking forward to election day is Buehler's former basketball coach at Roseburg High School, Don Crossfield. It will be a chance to cast a ballot for his student-turned-lifelong friend. Crossfield says he believes Buehler has remained unchanged at his core.

"He's unflappable — always calm, courteous and thoughtful," Crossfield said. "He and I don't always agree on every issue, but he has always carefully considered my point of view, and I think he will make wise and carefully considered decisions for the people of Oregon — if they let him."

That's a question that won't be answered until Nov. 6. As for the Westlund Baseball, Barton, the former lawmaker who gave it to Buehler had a suggestion.

"He should give it to a Democrat."

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