

GUEST EDITORIAL

Hidden money in campaigns

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Big piles of hidden cash are a cancer in the Oregon governor’s race. A group called Priority Oregon is running ads attacking Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat. A group called Defend Oregon’s Values has run ads attacking the Republican candidate, Rep. Knute Buehler of Bend. Who is paying for the ads? Shouldn’t Oregonians be able to find out easily?

Priority Oregon is the bigger mystery. It was incorporated by a couple of GOP strategists. It’s what is called a 501 (c)(4), a social welfare organization under the tax code. There’s a similar prominent group that generally supports union and Democratic causes called Our Oregon, also a 501(c)(4).

Having a 501(c)(4) designation means that a nonprofit can run ads and do other political advocacy without being required to disclose where it gets its money. That is not right. It doesn’t matter what side of the political spectrum it is on or what the group is supporting. Reporting by The Oregonian and Willamette Week has revealed ties between Priority Oregon and some businesses, but finding out where the money is coming from shouldn’t require an investigation.

Defend Oregon’s Values is more open. It has disclosed that it was set up set up by Service Employees Union, Local 49, to challenge Buehler’s record. It also has said it will disclose its donors. And its donors are indeed listed in state campaign finance records. But according to those records, most of its money — more than \$600,000 — has come from Kate Brown’s campaign. It’s really like an arm of Brown’s campaign.

All this is legal. Supporters of both candidates are using these tools to make it hard for Oregonians to know who is attacking Brown and Buehler. That’s a problem that needs to be corrected. If Brown or Buehler is elected, how will the public know if they are paying back secret supporters with legislative favors?

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

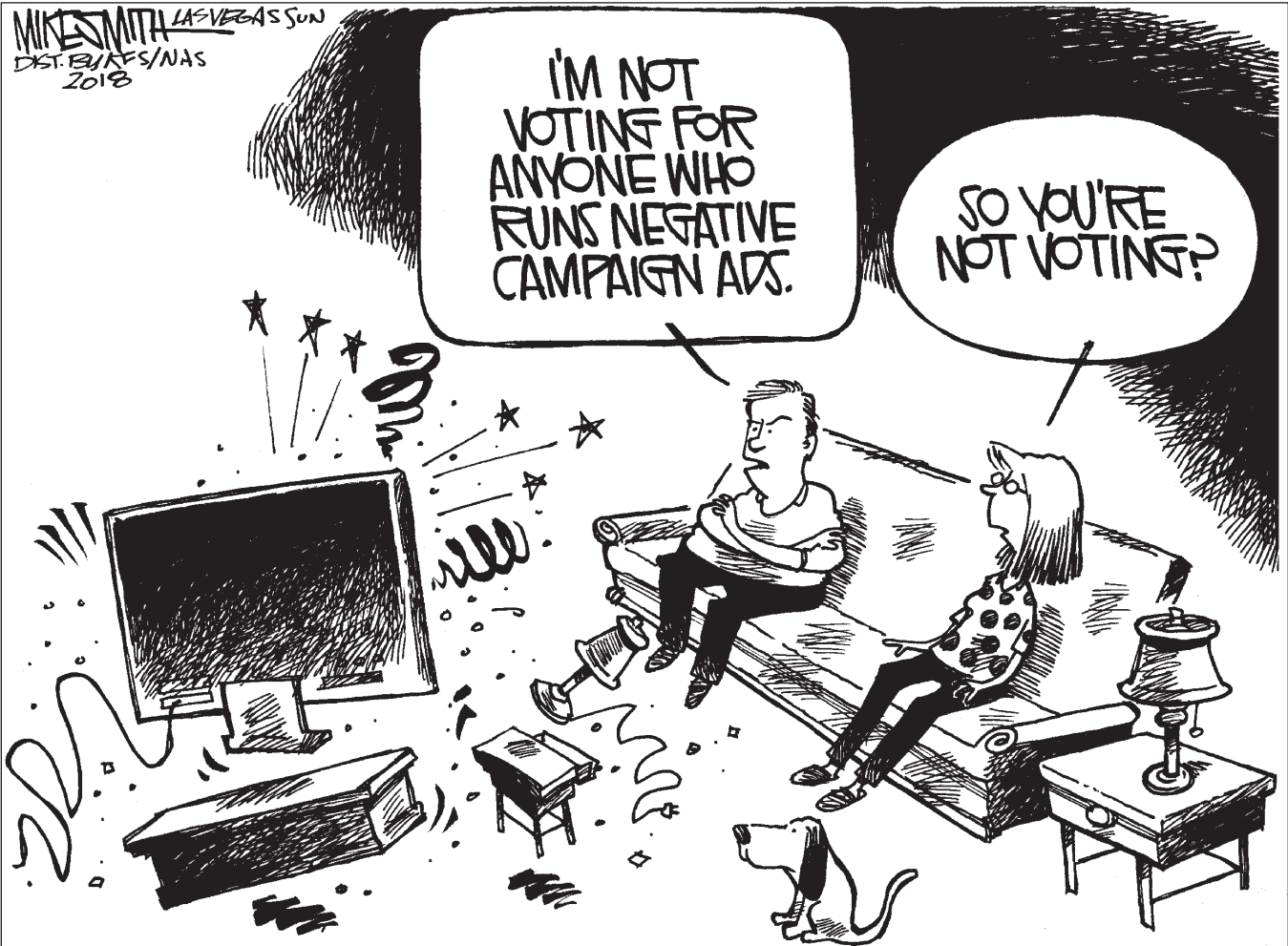
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Your views

Walden needs to be replaced by McLeod-Skinner

Greg Walden needs to go home. I am sick and tired of his bragging in half-truths while undermining our district and the nation. His disregard for facts and lack of respect for his constituents shows in every single newsletter and Facebook post. He brags about working on legislation to allow logging already burnt forests, yet he has done nothing to address the real wildfire issues in the district and he continues to undermine the federal agencies responsible for prevention and suppression. He would rather give huge gifts (tax cuts) to his fellow millionaires and corporate donors than fund public safety. Instead of promoting the rule of law and a level playing field, he brags about getting a pardon for convicted criminals. He brags about caring for veterans, but works hardest to undermine the healthcare of veteran families and the families of those who lost their lives on our behalf. He brags about supporting children’s healthcare and community clinics but held both of these hostage in his bid to eliminate the Affordable Care Act. He receives more money than any other politician from big pharma and I’m sure that drug companies bought his “He works for us” billboards because he sure has set them up nicely. He was lockstep with Trump in giving huge tax cuts to corporate fat cats and you can be sure he will be lockstep with Trump when they come for our Social Security and Medicare. Yes, Republican leadership is already casting these payroll deductions, programs we paid into

our entire working life, as entitlements that must be cut to afford the corporate giveaways. Our government is no longer by the people and for the people. It is by corporate millionaires for corporate millionaires. I admit, I’m not too excited about the Democrats in general, but I know I cannot afford the Republicans. Jamie McLeod-Skinner is not a millionaire and not a career politician. She is promising to represent the people of this district and rural values. I’d like to give her a chance. Vote for real representative government, vote for Jamie McLeod-Skinner.

Barbara O’Neal  
Baker City

Walden’s policies will hurt rural Oregon’s economy

As I contemplated the recent summer burn bans, I worried that perhaps my children will never remember a summer night of roasted marshmallows over a roaring campfire. Maybe instead, with watery eyes and burning lungs, they’ll find ashes raining like snow from a burnt orange sky commonplace. We’re already seeing crop and livestock losses due to drought, fire and flooding. What’s worse is that no one is going to protect us when it’s too late. Rural areas, like Baker County, are particularly vulnerable to global climate volatility due to physical isolation, lack of economic diversity, an aging population and high levels of poverty. The relatively limited diversity in our economy here means that inevitable changes in a single traditional economic sector, such

as agriculture, can place a huge and disproportionate tension on community stability. Our representative, Greg Walden, responds to the climate call with half-baked ideas about forest thinning and moving funds from one allocation to another. Meanwhile, he thinks that we rural Oregonians are simple-minded enough to accept the short-term employment benefit of further oil exploration and coal-fired power plants. Destroying the few valuable resources remaining while the threat of a greater issue literally stifles the air we breathe is an insult to our intelligence and way of life. I wish I could say that Walden’s motive was to actually stimulate job creation, but the truth is he has been bought, just as many senior congressional representatives have. Just as a beating heart needs fresh blood to keep pumping, our economy needs a fresh supply of diverse industries to sustain itself. Jamie McLeod-Skinner, candidate for Congress in our district, understands that. She knows that in order to support our rural way of life, we have to stop putting all our stock in an antiquated and economically unviable, non-renewable industry like coal. She understands that the best investment in our community is in initiatives that enable our community to sustain itself. If we work together to elect representatives that are not in the pocket of big gas and oil we can protect ourselves before it’s too late.

Anna Morgan-Hayes  
La Grande

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from Corvallis Gazette-Times

It’s another disappointment from a governor who pledged when she assumed office that transparency in state government would be a priority. Transparency was, Kate Brown said, an essential ingredient in her efforts to restore trust in state government. Brown’s record on transparency since then, however, has been spotty. Although it’s true that she has been on the side of government openness from time to time, she has not been the unwavering advocate of transparency that she pledged to be when she took over the office of governor after John Kitzhaber’s resignation. So a new development regarding state government documents that used to be open to public inspection is disappointing, but not entirely surprising. At issue are documents in which various state agencies propose legislative concepts to the governor. In these documents, the agencies identify the issues they want to resolve and suggest how the law can be changed to address the issues. The governor then decides which proposals move forward to the Office of Legislative Counsel, which drafts bills for legislative consideration. Each year since 2010, these documents produced by state agencies have been open to the public — or, at least, have been released to a Portland attorney, Greg Chaimov, whose law firm has

made a habit of asking for the documents under the Oregon Public Records Law. Chaimov has used the documents to inform his clients about pending proposals that might affect them. This year, however, the state Department of Administrative Services refused Chaimov’s request, arguing that the documents were protected by attorney-client privilege. Chaimov appealed the ruling, but it was upheld by Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum. The forms will be released only after the Legislative Counsel, submits the written proposals to the governor’s office for approval. That will be at the end of November, which, as astute readers may note, is after the election in which Brown faces a strong re-election challenge from Republican Knute Buehler. (Coincidentally, late November also is when Brown has said she will have specific proposals for how to trim the state budget, if major cuts are required; it will be a busy couple of weeks after the election for her.) Chaimov and his firm, Davis Wright Tremaine, have filed a lawsuit contesting the refusal to release the documents and Rosenblum’s ruling. (Chaimov, by the way, has deep experience with this issue that goes beyond just requesting these documents: From 1998 to 2004, he served as the legislative counsel.) There is legal reason to challenge the assertion that the documents are protected by attorney-client privilege.

In the lawsuit, John diLorenzo of Davis Wright Tremaine argues that bill-drafting services by the Office of Legislative Counsel aren’t protected by attorney-client privilege. The lawsuit argues that the Legislative Counsel may only represent the Legislature; therefore, extending that attorney-client privilege to the agencies of the state’s executive branch would violate the state constitution’s separation of powers clause. A spokeswoman for the state Department of Administrative Services said that this year’s denial isn’t a change in policy; rather, she said, state agencies wanted to bring their practices in line with the Legislature, which has the authority to exert privilege over its work with the Office of Legislative Counsel. And maybe that’s true. But, setting aside all the legal arguments for a moment, it’s an explanation that ignores something essential about truly open government: The idea that the process of making new laws, as messy as it can be sometimes, should be done, to the fullest possible extent, in full view of the public. That’s the primary reason why these documents need to be available to public view. If Gov. Brown believes that as well, it would be an easy matter for her to order the public release of the proposals. If she doesn’t believe that, she should explain to Oregon’s citizens why her administration chooses to carry on its business behind closed doors.