

Local & State

OREGON GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Brown, Buehler have last debate

By Mike Rogoway
The Oregonian

Sharp distinctions emerged between Oregon's leading gubernatorial candidates in their final debate on Tuesday night, as the two sparred over public pensions, immigration, the state's housing crisis and several other hot-button issues.

Rep. Knute Buehler sought to make the case a Republican can lead a distinctly Democratic state, declaring flatly he would approve no new restrictions on reproductive rights as governor. He accused Democratic Gov. Kate Brown of being ineffectual during her long stint in state government, noting that Oregon school districts are cutting teaching positions despite record revenue.

"The most important question facing all of us right now is our underperforming K-12 education system," Buehler said, arguing that Oregon's public pension obligations are siphoning money away from school spending.

"Those dollars aren't getting into the classroom," Buehler said.

For her part, incumbent Gov. Kate Brown sought to

undercut Buehler's credibility — attacking his positions on the environment, school spending and for courting the vote of abortion opponents before he became the Republican gubernatorial nominee.

"Rep. Buehler tells some voters one thing and other voters another," Brown said. "Unfortunately, that game won't work tonight because the whole state is watching."

Beyond the rhetoric, the candidates took substantive, divergent positions on key topics. The candidates returned repeatedly to the state's public pension crisis, the state's biggest fiscal issue. Buehler said he wants to transition state employees to a private-sector style, 401(k) retirement plan and accused the governor of "pandering" to public employee unions by raising pay before instituting broad pension reform.

While Brown said public employees "need to have some skin in the game," and pay some of their own pension costs, she didn't answer a direct question of how much they should pay. The governor resisted the notion of wholesale cuts, attacking Buehler directly. "I think

it's easy for a millionaire to say he's going to cut the retirements of hard-working Oregonians. I'm not willing to do that."

Other flashpoints Tuesday include:

Immigration

Buehler sought to finesse his support of immigrant rights with opposition to Measure 105, which would repeal Oregon's sanctuary state law. Brown reiterated her opposition to the repeal.

Housing prices

Brown backs the \$653 million Metro affordable housing bond in the Portland area, which proponents say would finance construction of as many as 12,000 affordable homes. Buehler opposes the measure, maintaining that public housing won't solve the problem. He favors housing assistance payments and zoning changes to make home construction more affordable and blamed the incumbent for escalating homelessness in cities across the state. "The results show that homelessness has grown much worse under Gov. Brown."

Vaccines

In response to a prerecorded voter question, Brown said, "We probably give some parents a little too much leeway" in allowing them to decline recommended vaccines for their children. Buehler, a physician, said he believes in the benefits of vaccine but departed from established medical recommendations. "I certainly believe that parents should have the right to opt out," he said.

The candidates were in broad agreement that political discourse must improve, and both faulted President Donald Trump for his words and actions. They also endorsed the scientific consensus around climate change, though Brown endorsed stricter rules governing carbon emissions while Buehler said he wants more flexibility.

Patrick Starnes, the Independent Party of Oregon's nominee for governor, filed a protest with the Oregon Secretary Of State on Tuesday over his exclusion from the debate. In the primary election, Starnes received 6,000 votes, a tiny fraction of what Brown and Buehler received.

COUNTY

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The county did not meet that deadline, and Dale said the state does not have a firm date from the county for when the audit will be submitted.

Dale said it is "highly unusual" for the state to grant an extension beyond one year, which would be Dec. 31, 2018. Baker County has not applied for another extension.

Baker County is the only one of Oregon's 36 counties that has not submitted its 2017 audit.

Curry County was the only other holdout, but it submitted its audit on July 10, 2018.

Baker County's failure to meet the deadline coincides with a change in its auditing firm.

For more than a dozen years previously, Guyer and Associates of Baker City had handled the county's audit.

In May 2017, Guyer and Associates notified the county that the firm would not be doing the audit for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2017.

Megan Adams, a CPA for Guyer and Associates, said the firm is moving away from doing municipal audits due

to the size of its staff and the time required.

She said the county audit takes about 525 hours.

On Sept. 6, 2017, the county approved a contract with the accounting firm of Pauly Rogers and Co. of Tigard, one of two bidders for the job.

(The other is a firm in Hermiston.)

The county's request for an extension from Dec. 20, 2017, stated that "County's auditor resigned late in the year so the County had to hire new auditors who did not have adequate time to complete audit."

County Commissioner Bruce Nichols, who has been a CPA for 34 years, said the 2017 audit has been close to completion for "quite some time" but hasn't been finished due to "issues that are going on that have not been resolved."

Although the county hired a new firm last year, this isn't the first time its audit has been late.

The county missed the Dec. 31 deadline for its previous six audits. The state granted an extension in each of those years, to March 31, and the county submitted its audit each time before the deadline.

Previous audits had been

late for a variety of reasons including staffing issues, "delays in closing the books" and new regulations, according to the county's requests for extensions.

Pauly Rogers and Co. was "very well recommended" by Guyer and Associates. Pauly Rogers and Co. did the 2017 audits for six of Oregon's 36 counties. Of those six audits, four, including Baker County's, were submitted late.

When Guyer and Associates handled the county's audit, the firm also prepared the elected official statements, which show all the money that goes in and out of accounts operated by county departments.

Nichols said that during this process the information need to complete these statements was not reaching Guyer and Associates in a timely manner.

Adams said it's common for the accounting firm to compile elected official statements for its clients.

Nichols believes part of the reason the 2017 audit is late is that Christena Cook, the county's administrative services director and the lead finance official, doesn't have enough help from other county employees with the audit.

Commission Chairman Bill Harvey has mainly worked in a supportive role on the audit. He said that Cook does "the lion's share" of the work.

"She does well," Harvey said. "We'd like to have more staff but you can't bring more staff right in the middle of doing a project."

Pauly Rogers and Co. will do the county's 2018 audit as well, but it can't be started until the 2017 audit is finished.

"There is no major concern as far as the auditing company is telling us," Harvey said.

The fee for the 2017 audit is not supposed to exceed \$41,500, but Nichols said that amount is based on a routine audit.

"This is an unusual circumstance so (the auditor) could say 'no, no we want this much more money' and he would be justified and I would have to say yes," Nichols said. "I think I would get some pushback from Bill (Harvey)."

The county's 2017-18 budget set aside \$45,000 for the audit for that fiscal year.

Representatives from Pauly Rogers and Co. couldn't be reached for comment.

COUNCIL

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Luckini also is among 10 candidates for City Council in the Nov. 6 election.

Luckini, who apologized to Hindman both before and after expressing his views on the proposed agreement, chastised the Council for even considering reducing water and sewer fees for Hindman's move to the industrial park.

"If they don't pay their fair share the citizens are going to have to make up for it and you guys know it," Luckini said.

Luckini encouraged other community residents to join him at Tuesday's meeting to oppose the proposal in a letter to the editor published in Friday's Baker City Herald.

He noted in his letter and again reminded councilors Tuesday of the \$3 public safety fee charged to all community residents to help raise money to fund police and fire staffing. He blamed the need for imposing the fee, which took effect July 1, 2017, on the city's "poor business decisions."

Tuesday night, Luckini said he believes that if the city is inclined to grant financial breaks to bring businesses to the industrial park, the city should bear the cost.

"The city needs to pay," he said. "Cut salaries, cut hours, cut benefits, but don't dump the burden on the back of the citizens of Baker."

In a proposal to the city, Jeremy Hindman wrote that the company employs himself and his wife along with "three warehouse employees and other remote employees. Our need for employees will increase as we: 1) double the size of our warehouse to 5000 square feet; and, (2) expand our product offerings and product lines."

In other business Tuesday night, the Council joined Police Chief Dustin Newman in recognizing Baker City Police Officers Shannon Regan and Blake Hawkins and Oregon State Police Trooper Tim Schuette for their life-saving efforts in response to a recent call in Baker City.

Newman praised the efforts of the three officers for successfully resuscitating a person who apparently had overdosed on heroin and wasn't breathing when they arrived.

"There is no doubt in my mind that if these guys hadn't shown up and done what they did, we would have had a person die," Newman said.

He said he believes the officers' quick response "reflects great credit upon themselves."

The Council also awarded a contract for \$1,294,755 to Mike Becker General Contractor to complete the second phase of improvements at the Baker City airport. The City will be reimbursed for the expense through state and federal grants.

NEWS OF RECORD

DEATHS

Grace Boyer: 87, of Boise, wife of Dale K. Boyer, died Sept. 2, 2018. Her graveside funeral will be at 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 15, at the Haines Cemetery.

James Grant: 74, formerly of Richland, died Oct. 9, 2018, at Providence Hospital in Portland. Interment will be at Eagle Valley Cemetery (time and date to be announced). Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com.

FUNERALS PENDING

Calvin 'Bud' Butts: Memorial service Saturday, Oct. 13, at 2 p.m. at Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel, 1500 Dewey Ave. Pastor Lennie Spooner of the Baker First Church of the Nazarene will officiate. Memorial contributions may be made to the Trail Tenders at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center through Grays West & Co., 1500 Dewey Ave., Baker City, OR 97814. To light a candle in memory of Bud, or to leave a condolence for his family, go to www.grayswestco.com

Glenna Lucile Smith: A Celebration of Life will take place at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, October 13, at the Halfway Lions Club Community Hall, 235 Lion St. in Halfway. After the service, friends are invited to join the family for a reception at Wild Bill's. Memorial contributions may be made to the Pine Valley Fair Exhibit Hall through Coles Tribute Center, 1950 Place St., Baker City, OR 97814. To light a candle in memory of Glenna, or to leave a condolence for the family, go to www.colestrIBUTEcenter.com

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POLICE LOG

Baker City Police Arrests, citations
TELEPHONIC HARASSMENT: Lorraine Gale Graves, 47, of 2433 First St., Apartment 4, 8:11 p.m. Tuesday, in the 2200 block of 19th Street; jailed.
POST-PRISON SUPERVISION VIOLATION (Oregon State Parole Board warrant): Devon Joseph Ricci, 40, transient, 1:37 a.m. Tuesday, in the 3200 block of 14th Street; jailed.

Baker County Sheriff's Office Arrests, citations
PROBATION VIOLATION: Lacey Kolb, 37, 390 E. Jefferson St., Huntington, 11:10 p.m. Tuesday in Huntington; jailed.
DISORDERLY CONDUCT II: Michael Oliver Murphy, 30, address unknown, 9:15 p.m. Monday, at Highway 30 and Chico Road; jailed.

Baker County Parole and Probation Arrests, citations
PROBATION VIOLATION (Detainer): Brandie Marie Kasinger, 29, of Baker City, 5:14 p.m. Tuesday, at 3320 K St.; jailed.

BABIES

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At her appointment, Johnson was able to have the nurse weigh her baby, then she fed him and weighed again to see how much he ate.

"She is resourceful and puts your mind at ease," Johnson said. "Lynn is a rock star. There are so many ups and downs in the first four months."

The Infant Nutrition and Lactation Program is offered through the Birth Center at St. Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City.

The center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and moms with breastfeeding concerns can call for advice. If additional help is needed, an appointment is made with Fletcher or Scarfo.

The phone number is 541-524-7747.

The lactation consultants can help with latch issues, breast pain, nipple pain, low

milk supply, over supply, infant weight issues and more.

Expectant parents are also encouraged to make an appointment to get information prior to the arrival of the baby.

"We highly encourage prenatal appointments," Fletcher said. "The more you know going into it, the more successful you'll be with breastfeeding."

To be certified, Fletcher and

Scarfo studied for and passed a certification exam. They must log continuing education hours after being certified, and retake the board every 10 years.



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Measure 1-88



Augustus Macy

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- The Parents of Augustus Macy

Paid for by the YES FOR KIDS Committee, Debbie Penning, Treasurer

