Local & State

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 30 INCLUDES BAKER COUNTY

Cliff Bentz seeking first elected term in state Senate

■ Democrat Solea Kabakov of The Dalles is running against the Ontario Republican

By Gary A. Warner
WesCom News Service

The sprawling Senate District 30 is the largest in the Oregon Legislature. It runs up from the Nevada and Idaho state lines before sweeping west to include a swath up to the Columbia River and down to Jefferson County and northern Deschutes County.

It's so big it includes two time zones — most of Malheur County in the southeastern edge of the district is in the Mountain Time Zone used by neighboring Idaho.

The district was long represented by Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, who served as the Senate minority leader until his 2017 appointment to the Northwest Power and Conservation Planning Council by Gov. Kate Brown.

Republican leaders selected Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, to replace Ferrioli.

Bentz must now run to fill out the last two remaining years on Ferrioli's term.

Senate District 30 is heavily Republican in voter registration. In 2016, Ferrioli won with 71 percent of the vote over Democrat Mark Stringer.

Fulfilling a promise to compete in even the most difficult districts, Democrats have fielded progressive political activist Solea Kabakov of The Dalles to run for the seat. A salesperson by profession, Kabakov's website features a rainbow peace flag and calls for bringing rural voices and "social, racial, economic and environmental justice" to Salem.

The Bulletin asked Bentz and Kabakov questions on two issues and let the candidates add one or two more they think is important. Here are their responses:

Q: What can the Legislature do to make housing more affordable, while at the same time not degrading the environment that attracts so many people to the district?

• Bentz: Educate the public on need and on benefits of adequate housing. Obtain participatory investment from local businesses that need a stable and reliable workforce. Provide paid staffing to help gather together financing in smaller communities for affordable local housing. Relax land use when appropriate. Explore tax credits for construction and lower taxes for new, affordable (lower than $250,000) homes. Understand and address impact of arrangements such as Airbnb. Stop ineffective and harmful policies such as rent control, relocation assistance and no-fault tenancy terminations.

• Kabakov: We can provide stable, affordable housing if we employ creative strategies. Low or zero interest loans for property owners, and developers providing low-income housing and tax breaks to companies hiring local folks for construction and maintenance of these properties, would be strong incentives. Looking into programs that are successful in other states would be a good first step toward determining the most sensible strategy for rural Oregon. A deep examination of existing buildable land is necessary prior to decision-making around expanding urban growth boundaries in our communities.

Q: Oregon is near the bottom in terms of high school graduation rates in the nation. If elected, what will you do to move the state in the direction of improved results in education in general and high school graduation rates in particular?

• Bentz: Save some money by imposing a five-year cap on administrator pay. (It's currently out of proportion to teacher's salaries) Make the long-term, expensive, and difficult fix to PERS, thus increasing the amount of money available for use in programs that excite children — CTE (Career and Technical Education) for example. Encourage and expand mentorship programs. Use the money that is saved from addressing and paying the PERS shortfall (to the extent there is any left) to lengthen the school year. Find money for retrofitting of school buildings.

• Kabakov: When I was in high school I learned to weld through regional occupational programming. We too can provide occupational training for jobs in our district. Much like the Columbia Gorge Community College's renewable energy program, which prepares people for jobs on wind farms, we can prepare our youth to join the local workforce. But here in rural Oregon this must be free of charge and available to all students. We can also expand on the free college tuition program by lowering the grade point average required to qualify to make sure more kids can make it to college.

Q: What other one or two issues affecting Senate District 30 do you think are especially important and would be areas where you would expect to be involved in the 2019 Legislature?

• Bentz: It's getting hotter/warmer/drier. Include in the likely carbon bill allocations to water conservation and storage, allocations to forest health, allocations to fire prevention and smoke management and desalinization studies for additional water supplies on the Oregon Coast.

Mental health management: Our mentally challenged population is ending up in prison without adequate care. Talk to any law enforcement person and the immediate topic is how to deal with those who suffer from mental illness. Our current system is inadequate and needs peer-reviewed attention.

• Kabakov: The No. 1 issue I encounter in our beautiful district is poverty. This comes in many forms; unemployment, underemployment, lack of affordable housing, lack of public transportation, little or no free broadband internet access, dwindling access to local grocery stores and other amenities, lack of urgent care centers, increased drug and alcohol abuse, increased suicides. I will work hard on all of these related issues to help create an environment in which we all can thrive. By combating poverty we will reduce crime, live healthier, longer lives and take pride in improving rural Oregon for future generations.

Cliff Bentz

- Party: Republican
- Age: 66
- Residence: Ontario
- Profession: State senator
- Education: Bachelor of science degree in history, Eastern Oregon University, law degree, Lewis and Clark Law School

Solea Kabakov

- Party: Democratic
- Age: 45
- Residence: The Dalles
- Profession: Sales
- Education: No higher education degree

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hospital receives grant for labor bed

Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City has received a $10,000 grant from the DE & Jane Clark Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation to help buy a new labor and delivery bed for the hospital's birth center.

The Saint Alphonsus Foundation-Baker City will supply the remaining $6,445 needed to buy the bed.

BTI

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The two gave an enthusiastic report to other directors of what the new center will mean, not only to the Agriculture Science Department, but to other aspects of Baker Technical Institute during Thursday's Board meeting.

The new structure carries a price tag of about $165,000, Doug Dalton, BTI president, said earlier in the week. It will replace older greenhouses that were lost to the heavy winter snowstorms of 2016.

The cost of the new building is being paid by donations, insurance money and Measure 98 funding, Dalton stated in a press release. Measure 98, among other things, allocates money to schools throughout the state for career and technical training.

Dalton said the new agriculture center will give students a state-of-the-art facility for hands-on learning in the field of controlled environment agriculture or CEA.

Dalton explained that CEA is a technology based approach toward the production of plants and their products, such as vegetables and flowers.

"We are very excited to see this project begin," Dalton stated. "This center will give our students learning opportunities in agriculture that have not existed before."

Dalton said the new structure will not only allow the FFA Chapter to bring back popular community projects such its hanging baskets, but it also will allow BTI to partner with industry to tie education to this expanding field.

"We simply see investing in agriculture education as key to keeping communities in Eastern Oregon thriving," Dalton said.

To prepare the site for the new structure, playground equipment that had at one time served kindergarten students housed in the northwest wing of Baker High School, which is now home to BTI, was removed.

Dan Srack, the District's maintenance supervisor, said Wednesday, that he made the decision to give the equipment, which he thought had outlived its usefulness to the District, to a community member whose daughter has special needs in exchange for the person's labor in clearing the equipment from the site.

"There was a mix-up," Srack said while working at the site. "I was trying to help a father and his daughter and I called it the wrong way."

In a press release issued earlier this week, Witty said the district has a "surplus process" that Srack did not follow.

"The playground equipment is now back in our possession and we are researching potential uses for the structure," Witty said.

In the meantime, the equipment is stored behind the track at BHS.

Witty stated in the press release that the District is working with the company that handles its property and liability insurance to determine if the equipment still meets safety standards for use in schools.

"If the equipment is determined to be safe for public use, the District will meet with school and community entities to determine the best location and use for the equipment," he said.

Baker County Republicans
Recommends Voting For:

- Greg Walden for US Representative, CD2
- Knute Buehler for Governer
- Vote YES on 1-84, Baker County Measure, the Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance

Vote YES on State Measures:

- 103 Vote YES to ban a sales tax on groceries
- 104 Vote YES to require a 3/5 majority before and tax or fee increase
- 105 Vote YES to repeal state sanctuary status
- 106 Vote YES for nor more tax payer funded abortions

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November 10th, 2018
9:00 AM
Start Line : Mt. Hope Cemetery
Finish Line : Baker Sports Complex
Hosted By
ALL AMERICAN METAL ART
For More Info
Contact All American Metal Art
Owner: Tyler Gassin
541-519-4243
All Are Welcome to Participate in a Free, Fun, Family Event Supporting Our Veterans
Bring Your Own American Flag to Run With!
Meet Our Local Veterans and Check Out What They Are Recieving For Their Service

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Michael Lary Coast Guard
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