

Local & State

Bev Clarno makes history as Oregon's new secretary of state

■ Former lawmaker, who recently turned 83, is the oldest to hold the state's second-highest office, and for the first time women hold 4 of Oregon's 5 statewide positions

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — A glass ceiling was broken in Oregon Wednesday when a former lawmaker and hog farmer was sworn in as secretary of state, marking the first time in state history that women have held four of five statewide offices.

Bev Clarno is also the oldest person to have ever held the office, according to Kerry Tymchuk, executive director of the Oregon Historical Society. Clarno turned 83 on Friday and was on vacation when Gov. Kate Brown left her a voicemail, saying she was being tapped to serve in the state's second-highest office.

Clarno, addressing a packed room in Brown's office after being sworn in, equated age with experience and said: "As the most experienced secretary of state in Oregon's history, I look forward to proving that ageism belongs in the same dustbin as sexism

"As the most experienced secretary of state in Oregon's history, I look forward to proving that ageism belongs in the same dustbin as sexism and racism."

— Bev Clarno, Oregon secretary of state



and racism."

Applause erupted among those attending the ceremony, including Brown, Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle, Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and Treasurer Tobias Read, the lone male among the five statewide office holders.

Clarno succeeds Dennis Richardson, a Republican who died in February of brain cancer. Clarno, also a Republican, said in an interview that her first priority is to get a budget for her office passed. She also intends to quickly fill positions of three executives — all political appointments — whom she dismissed in order to bring in a new team. However she indicated she intends to keep elections director Steve Trout

on board.

As the state's top election official, Clarno will be responsible for overseeing the 2020 elections.

"As far as being a steward of integrity, fairness and honesty, I intend to be right there on the front line making sure our elections are run absolutely without question," she said.

Clarno said her background in the hog business near the northern Oregon town of Wasco prompted her to start thinking about serving in the Legislature. She recalled that government inspectors came to check out her indoor hog business.

"I thought they were overregulating," she said. "I thought, gee, I'm going

to get elected one day, and government agencies should be thinking about the people that they're regulating in the manner of helping us do the right thing and not penalizing."

Clarno was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1988, and served as House speaker from 1995 to 1997. She then was elected to the state Senate in 2000, which was split 15-15 between Republicans and Democrats. She became Senate Republican Leader in 2003. In that role, she developed a closer working relationship with Brown, who was then a top Democratic senator, and other caucus leaders as they devised a memorandum of understanding.

"We worked through that and realized we had to share," Clarno said in the interview. "We had to determine, number one, who was going to be senate president, and we couldn't agree on that at all."

"But it's part of what we are.

"School is for everyone and everybody should feel safe to be here," Palmer said.

HEALTH

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Palmer also will speak about the health education standards as part of the Brooklyn Primary School's PTO meeting, which begins at 6 p.m. at the school at 1350 Washington Ave.

The standards were adopted by the state in 2016. Materials to support instruction for Grades 4-12 were reviewed by community partners and parents during a meeting last May.

At Monday's presentations, Palmer will bring what she calls "planning maps" to help explain how materials and guest speakers from the community will help teachers provide information the state has deemed necessary for schools to cover in Grades K-3 under the new health standards.

"There is no formal curriculum for this," Palmer says. "There is very little the ODE (Oregon Department of Education) even put on the table for elementary," she said.

The standards are adopted at the state level, but the district decides how the material is presented, Palmer said.

For example, the standards set a target of teaching children in the primary grades to name reproductive body parts using proper anatomical terms.

While the proper terms might be used as needed — when a student is hurt, for example — they will not be emphasized.

"We talked about what we were comfortable doing," she said, adding that teacher teams came up with the instructional plans.

"They are the ones working closest with kids and families," she said. "They live in this community and they reflect this community."

"They came to an agreement: 'Let's honor the spirit of what's intended here,'" Palmer said. "We're not going to have a chart and put labels on body parts."

Instead, lessons will be assembled that are designed to be palatable for most families.

Community partners, including counselors and health care professionals, and representatives of MayDay, the Tooth Taxi, Baker Vision Clinic, the YMCA, Oregon Trail Electric Co-op and police

and fire agencies will join classroom teachers and physical education teachers for the year-long instruction.

Among the topics to be covered are personal health and disease prevention, bullying, feelings and emotions, building healthy relationships, developing a healthy self-image, conflict resolution and safe and unsafe touches.

Picture books appropriate for the primary level students also will be used to help teachers and community partners talk about these issues, Palmer said.

As the material is rolled out, parents will be encouraged to meet with classroom teachers and to make arrangements for their children to opt out of any material they find offensive or inappropriate for their children.

Grades 4-8 are using monthly magazines from "The Great Body Shop," series that students take home to discuss with their families.

At the high school level, traditional health textbooks are used.

These lessons are being introduced at an earlier age under the new standards for a purposeful reason, Palmer believes. She cites data she has looked at from various state and county agencies that show children are facing serious issues at younger ages. Those issues include family conflicts, alcohol and drugs, and exposure to sexual materials and sexual approaches.

Up to now, schools have not provided children the education they need to respond appropriately, she believes.

"There may be a reason why the state is asking us to embed this stuff a little earlier — why we're moving things forward," Palmer said.

The topics of "gender expression" and "sexual orientation," have especially caught the attention of some parents and community residents concerned about the new standards.

Palmer assures people that the lessons presented at the primary level will be age-appropriate and will not attempt to introduce concepts that would be difficult for young children to understand.

Here is one example from the primary level curriculum

map template:

Learning target: Students will demonstrate understanding of how to "Recognize the importance of treating others with respect including gender expression and sexual orientation (Girls respect Boys and Boys respect Girls)."

Palmer said the primary level instruction is among the building blocks for later lessons on those issues.

"Don't make fun of that on either side," she said teachers want their students to understand. "Boys should not treat girls badly and girls should not treat boys badly."

And that means respecting choices boys and girls make regarding hairstyles or clothing selections.

"We don't allow kids to be targeted, made fun of or bullied," she said.

In addition to protecting students, some of the topics are geared to teaching lessons they need to learn to navigate through hallways and cooperate on the playground.

"The map is an outline of what we're approaching and how we're approaching it," Palmer said.

As with reading, writing and math lessons, principals will monitor how teachers are presenting the materials to students.

Palmer said she has confidence in the District's teaching staff. As part of her job as assistant superintendent she works to help new staff members be successful.

"I get to know every elementary and secondary educator we hire," she said.

She meets with the teaching staff for four days in August as the new school year begins and spends six extra evenings talking with them about instruction and student and parent communication, among other topics.

"I get a good feel for the new teachers and how they approach teaching," she said.

Palmer says her main concern as an educator is that students learn to respect each other.

"We do have kids with gender issues," she said.

"In this community we're still insulated enough that we see this as something being done to us," she said of the state health standards.

OREGON BRIEFING

Agency failed to disclose deaths of two children in licensed day care centers

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon child care regulators have disclosed the deaths of two children in licensed day care facilities that were not previously made public, a newspaper reported.

The state failed to disclose the deaths in 2011 and 2012 until this week, and until last month did not disclose the death of a third child last August, The Oregonian/Oregon Live reported Wednesday.

The deaths happened at Little Rascals in Portland on Jan. 25, 2011, and at Annie's Kids in Clackamas on Aug. 21, 2012, said Melanie Mesaros, a state Office of Child Care spokeswoman. Mesaros could not immediately provide the ages or genders of the children or the circumstances of either death.

The death of a child at Little Big Blessings in Eugene on Aug. 22, 2018, was not initially disclosed due to guidance from the Eugene Police Department, which is investigating the case, officials said.

The Office of Child Care did not intend to mislead the public and blamed the state's failure to provide accurate fatality statistics following changes in 2013 to a tracking system for child welfare cases, Mesaros said.

Gov. Brown wants to revive plan to build new bridge across Columbia River

Gov. Kate Brown wants Oregon to accelerate plans to replace the interstate bridge over the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington.

Assuming Washington's Legislature approves a \$17.5 million request from Gov. Jay Inslee to open a new bistate office to lead design, engineering and public outreach for a new bridge, Brown said Oregon must be ready to act. If the money comes through, that joint office should be opened by the end of the year, Brown said.

In a March 20 letter to the chair of the Oregon Transportation Commission, Brown said the aging bridge spanning the Columbia River is "a seismic risk, a freight bottleneck, a barrier to effective public transportation and a source of some of the worst gridlock in the nation."

"Its current condition poses a threat to Oregon's economic vitality," Brown wrote to Tammy Baney, who leads the state's top transportation decision-making body, "and is negatively impacting the livability of our state."

The letter is the latest indication the moribund project, which died in 2014 when Oregon finally walked away one year after Washington lawmakers declined to pay for its share of the ill-fated Columbia River Crossing project, is gearing up once again.

— Andrew Theen, The Oregonian

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