

Local & State

Buehler won't run for governor in 2022

By Gary A. Warner
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Knute Buehler says he will not run for governor in 2022 and endorses President Donald Trump's reelection this November.

Buehler, the former two-term state representative from Bend, lost the Republican primary for the 2nd Congressional District on Tuesday. It was his third loss at the polls for a major office, following unsuccessful bids for secretary of state in 2012 and governor in 2018.

In an exchange of emails, Buehler, 55, said Thursday that he wouldn't run again for the state's top job in two years.

"No, I am not considering a run for governor in 2022," Buehler said. "But I will support a candidate who can help restore fiscal responsibility and bring government accountability to the state I love so dearly."

Buehler didn't specifically rule out a run for some office someday, but spoke of his personal political career in past tense.

"Politics and public service has been an exhilarating experience made possible by family, friends, and tremendous supporters," he said. "I'll never forget it but it is time to change my focus to other pursuits."

Buehler said he supports Trump's bid for a second term. Buehler has said he did not

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— Knute Buehler



vote for Trump in 2016 and has been critical at times of Trump's actions. But now Buehler says Trump is his choice for the White House in 2020.

"The President's policies have been good for Oregon and good for the U.S.," Buehler said. "I will support his election in November."

Buehler was critical of former Vice President Joe Biden, the likely 2020 Democratic presidential nominee.

"The policies being supported by Joe Biden, like the 'Green New Deal,' open borders, and government takeover of our healthcare system, are deeply concerning," Buehler said.

In 2012, Buehler decided to make his first bid for public office a run for a statewide office, secretary of state. He won the GOP nomination but lost that November to Democrat Kate Brown. Buehler ran successfully for the House District 54 seat in 2014, despite a Democratic voter registration edge over Republicans.

He was reelected in 2016, then launched his campaign for governor in 2018. He was going against the odds — no

Republican had been elected governor since Vic Atiyeh won a second term in 1982.

Buehler won the GOP primary to face Brown, now governor. The pair raised and spent nearly \$40 million, a state campaign record. Despite some polls showing the race too close to call near the end, Brown won with a 6 percentage margin over Buehler.

Despite the loss, Buehler was seen as a top contender to run again in 2022, when Brown wouldn't be on the ballot because of term limits.

"Knute Buehler certainly has the name recognition and fundraising ability," said Jim Moore, a political analyst at Pacific University's Tom McCall Center for Civic Engagement, in an interview soon after the 2018 election.

But when U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, announced last fall that he would retire from Congress after 22 years, Buehler immediately jumped into the race.

In 2018, Buehler sought to cast himself as a once-popular Oregon political type: the moderate Republican. He was pro-choice and pro-LGBTQ rights, but fiscally conserva-

tive with nuanced stands on left vs. right litmus test issues like gun rights and the environment.

"I am running for governor of Oregon — for all of Oregon," he said during the 2018 campaign. "I'm not running for party chairman or political analyst."

In 2018, Buehler had to appeal to all voters in all regions of the state. The 2nd congressional district primary in 2020 was limited to Republicans in a conservative district where Trump prevailed in the 2016 general election 55% to 35% over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Though he raised \$1.3 million, Buehler was cast by conservatives as a "RINO" — Republican In Name Only. Buehler's earlier statements that he had not voted for Trump in 2016 hurt him with some voters. Opponents brought up his May 2017 Facebook post critical of Trump.

"Being inexperienced, ill-tempered and even incompetent are not crimes, but impeding or obstructing justice is, so we need to fully understand what President Trump has done," Buehler wrote at the time.

Buehler supporters hoped the unusually large field of 11 Republican candidates for the congressional seat might splinter the vote, allowing Buehler to win a plurality

and move on to the general election. Such a split worked in Buehler's favor in the 2018 GOP primary for governor. He received just 47% of the vote, but won because Sam Carpenter of Bend and Greg Wooldridge of Portland divided the larger conservative vote.

The congressional race was limited primarily to television and online advertising, as Brown's "Stay Home, Save Lives" cut off any traditional events such as rallies, news conferences, town halls and in-person debates during the latter portion of the campaign.

On Tuesday, the top candidate did win with a small plurality — former Sen. Cliff Bentz of Ontario, received just over 30% of the vote. Buehler finished second at 22%, with double-digit chunks of the vote also going to former Sen. Jason Atkinson of Central Point and Bend transplant Jimmy Crumpacker, who was backed by Oregon Right-to-Life and gun rights groups.

In the short term, Buehler says he is looking forward to some downtime with his wife, Patty, even though the COVID-19 crisis limits chances to get away.

"With Patty, I'm going to reflect on what I've learned and done and consider what I want to write on the open pages of the next chapter of my life," Buehler said.

PRISON

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Only about 15% of nearly 2,000 inmates at the penitentiary have been tested. Statewide, about 4 percent of inmates have been tested in a population of about 14,000. The state does not have data on numbers of workers who have been tested since those are done by employees' medical providers.

"We have the capacity to test pretty much as many patients as we would like but there is some natural resistance to (inmates) wanting to be tested," he said.

The state last week also began antibody testing in its prisons, though no results are in yet. The tests, which detect the presence of coronavirus antibodies, were offered at Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, which had 25 cases of the disease. The agency said the testing "will help us quantify the breadth and scope of the virus" in prisons where the disease is present.

It is unclear how much long-term protection antibodies offer, DiGiulio said.

"We don't know for sure if these antibodies are completely protective," he said. "We don't know if they are partially protective. At this point, there is still quite a bit of uncertainty."

SPORTS

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• Before each workout, all athletes and coaches must receive temperature checks, and those with a temperature exceeding 100.3 degrees should not

participate. Those experiencing positive symptoms should not be allowed to attend and should self-isolate.

• Wearing face masks is optional but should strictly follow state, local and district guidelines. However, the OSAA recommends cloth face cover-

ings be worn by students except for "swimming, distance running or high-intensity aerobic activities." Coaches and officials and contest personnel are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings whenever physical distancing is not possible.

• No sharing of water bottles or other athletic equipment, which includes towels, shoes, clothes, and balls. Hydration stations should not be used.

• Sports and activities will be broken up into three different levels of infection risk activities. Cross-country, track and

field, swimming, golf and tennis fall under the "lower infection risk activities." Volleyball, soccer, baseball, softball and basketball are "moderate risk," while football, wrestling, cheerleading and dance/drill are deemed "higher infection risk activities."

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