

## OUR VIEW

## Bentz best choice for Congress

Greg Walden is retiring, creating a race for an open seat for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District. Cliff Bentz, a Republican, is the best person to fill it.

Bentz, 68, is an attorney and former state legislator — 10 years in the House and 2 years in the Senate. His opponent, Democrat Alex Spenser, 55, has worked many different jobs, including as a writer. There are sharp differences between them on a host of issues.

Spenser wants to require gun owners to be regularly tested on every gun they own for safety and proficiency. Bentz does not want new gun laws. He wants the ones in place to be enforced. That is not to say, though, that he would not support changes if laws are not working as they should.

Spenser supports expanding something like the Oregon Health Plan to every American. Bentz does not want a single-payer system. He wants people to have health care. He doesn't want the government to control it all.

On climate, Spenser backs the "Green New Deal." We agree the nation needs a bold climate action plan. The Green New Deal is not the one. The federal government should not guarantee everyone a job, as nice as that might sound. The federal government should not be taking total or partial control of energy, transportation and more. It puts too much faith and control in the hands of government planners. Bentz's concept is more circumspect, realistic and decentralized. He believes climate change is real. He wants innovation, sequestration and adaptation. He wants solutions that save people money and not more top-down fees.

Spenser's vow to work toward ending the divisiveness in Congress is appealing. But Bentz has real experience in the Legislature working across party lines. He never spent one day in the majority while in office. He managed to get things done. Two examples: Oregonians finally get an opportunity to pump some of their own gas and they can drive a little faster on rural roads because of Bentz. He also helped lead the compromise between Democrats and Republicans to deliver the \$5 billion state transportation package in 2017. That package does everything from helping transit to repairing and improving roads.

With Walden's retirement, Oregon's 2nd Congressional District loses a powerful, effective voice in Washington. Bentz's record of political accomplishment is a much better starting point than Spenser's.

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## Your views

## Gretchen Stadler is my top choice for Baker City Council

Local elections give us the chance to elect candidates that influence the policy-making decisions that affect us the most. I believe everyone has the right to dignity, respect, a safe environment, and opportunities for success. In the upcoming city council elections, I feel strongly that Gretchen Stadler is the top candidate for the job.

Gretchen's ability to listen to concerns of the community, engage in discussions on how to better our community, provide attainable solutions to problems, and her resounding respect for others will make her a valuable member of Baker City Council. Now more than ever, we need city council members who are dedicated to bringing our community together. This is not the time to elect city council members who perpetuate drama and their own self-interest. Therefore, I am supporting Gretchen Stadler for City Council because I believe her morals and determination are valuable for our community and Baker City Council.

I have seen Gretchen's efforts in action and be a resounding voice for our community by bettering public spaces, community parks and recreation, investing in local community resources, increasing recycling efforts, supporting inclusivity for all Baker County residents, and petitioning for the Quiet Zone — so freight trains stop sounding their horns unless for an emergency. I feel strongly that Gretchen will help see policies through fruition that are voiced and supported by Baker City constituents. I hope that our communi-

ty is aware of Gretchen's candidacy and seeks to learn more about her values and principles as they will surely be impressed with her commitment to making Baker City the best it can be.

**Emily Simko**  
Baker City

## Photos of mask-less customers hurt businesses

Is it true a business person here in Baker City is going around to other business to take pictures of customers not wearing a face mask and then turning the business into OSHA? By turning them into OSHA, the business can receive a fine and/or be closed. How can that be? What a shameful thing to do! With all the problems that COVID-19 has caused, why would anyone do that? What kind of person would cause even more economical hardships for large and small businesses? I cannot believe any one would be so small and petty as to cause more harm to the community during this time. We all know that face masks don't do any good and our county has a low rate of Covid-19 and deaths. One death was not by COVID even though the state reported it that way. Even Union has a snitch for face masks! As Dennis Falk of Union, stated, "... Make up your own educated decision on if you need a mask or not ... It is not our place to go against your freedom as Americans." We should all stand up against our governor and refuse to wear face masks and get on with life pre-COVID. Open businesses and go back to school. This is the land of the free not of the oppressed. The people turning in businesses should be

ashamed of themselves and apologize to the citizens for being treacherous, petty, and traitorous to the community.

**Penny Rienks**  
Baker City

## Gretchen Stadler would be productive city councillor

I wholeheartedly endorse Gretchen Stadler for City Council. Local government plays an important and visible role in our daily life. We need a diverse body of intelligent, dedicated, and respectful individuals motivated to serve the interests of the whole community. Gretchen is just the kind of competent, hard-working, and thoughtful person we need.

I have had the pleasure of working with Gretchen on several community projects. She can always be counted on for well thought out, inclusive, and comprehensive perspectives. Gretchen's open-minded approach to problem-solving comes with a willingness to listen and learn. Though polite and humble, Gretchen is also strong enough to challenge preconceived ideas, identify biases, and build consensus.

City council members need to be committed to doing the necessary work. This includes studying materials generated by city staff, researching best practices, formulating appropriate questions, and listening and responding to citizen input. You can count on Gretchen to put in the time and effort to be an informed and productive member of the council. She will get my vote and I hope she'll get your vote too.

**Cynthia Roberts**  
Baker City

## 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.

- 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 will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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## Cost of COVID-19 test key to kids in classrooms

By **Melissa Syzmanski**

Teachers are a keystone of the nation's economic recovery. We need to return to classrooms so that students can learn, and parents can return to work.

Yet across the country students, teachers and families are in limbo, contending with virtual schooling, which isn't an ideal learning environment.

To get teachers like me safely back in schools as soon as possible, we must reduce the risk of spreading this disease to our colleagues and students. I want to get back in the classroom just as much as the families whose kids I teach. By routinely taking COVID-19 tests, even if asymptomatic, we can reduce the school outbreak risk that would significantly set back reopening timelines.

A major barrier to achieving this testing peace of mind is the lack of cost certainty around COVID-19 di-

agnoses. If teachers like me have to worry that COVID-19 tests might generate ruinous medical bills, we will be far less likely to get the care we need and our students deserve. Testing price transparency is the solution.

I speak from personal experience. This spring, I tried to get a COVID-19 test but didn't fit the profile required to receive one at the time. Instead, I was forced to go to the ER to get a chest X-ray, but I also received an EKG, IV fluids, a flu test and a pregnancy test, because I was in rough shape when I arrived. I was hit with \$4,500 worth of associated bills, brought down to \$3,200 by insurance, in the ensuing weeks. (It turned out that I had contracted COVID-19. While my medical health has recovered, my financial health has not. Fighting these bills has been a part-time job in and of itself.)

I'm not alone. There are also

countless stories of patients like me who are denied COVID-19 tests yet receive five-figure bills for other related exams. Patients who do receive COVID-19 tests have been charged roughly \$6,500. While these bills are outliers, tests regularly range from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

According to a Gallup Poll, nearly one in six Americans with COVID-19 symptoms would not get tested for fear of unknown costs. Hidden health care prices are, therefore, not only a financial threat but also a public health menace. Hidden prices will delay the safe reopening of classrooms and the associated economic growth.

If teachers — and all Americans — knew exactly what they had to pay for a COVID-19 test and that they wouldn't be subject to additional related charges, more people will get tested and fewer will get in-

fectured. This price certainty will give us the freedom and control to get tested when and where we want.

Health care price transparency offered systemwide can provide health care consumers with cost certainty over all their care, ending the bizarre status quo where patients are blinded from prices until they receive their bills in the mail weeks and months after treatment.

Price transparency can also lower runaway health care costs. With access to real prices, patients can shop around for less expensive care and find better value the same way we do for auto repair, hair styling and life insurance.

Empowering patients with prices will enable us to steer clear of price gouging providers that charge \$6,500 for COVID tests, \$20,000 for broken arms or \$600 for Band-Aids. Vast price differentials for the same health care services in the same market will converge.

Ensuing market competition will put further downward pressure on prices.

According to a recent nationwide poll, nearly 90% of Americans and 98% of women under the age of 40 support this commonsense reform. Almost no other issue in today's politically polarized environment enjoys such overwhelming bipartisan support.

By providing COVID-19 testing cost certainty to teachers, health care price transparency can make classrooms safer and return children faster, allowing parents to return to work, boosting the economic recovery.

Just like how students rely on teachers to provide them with knowledge, teachers and all Americans need health care price information.

*Melissa Syzmanski is an elementary school teacher in Windsor, Connecticut.*