# **Oregon Republicans downplay Trump, tout issues**

By Claire Withycombe Capital Bureau

Republican gubernatorial candidate Jeff Smith claims he's got a winning strategy, one that he's willing to share with his competitors: Don't talk about Trump.

"I am working hard to convince them that the issue is not Donald Trump," Smith said, standing in front of his booth at the 54th annual Dorchester Conference, the annual gathering of Oregon Republicans, in Salem on Saturday. "The issue is winning."

Although Smith is lesser-known among the broad bench of Republicans seeking the GOP nomination for governor, he's confident enough that he says he bet the campaign manager for fellow candidate Sam Carpenter whose slogan is "Make Oregon Great Again" - \$100 that he beats Carpenter in the primary.

Should I make it \$1,000?" he asked a reporter.

Following the online publication of this story, Jeff Smith and David Gulliver, manager of the Sam Carpenter campaign, contacted the Capital Bureau to clarify that they did not bet on the outcome of the Republican primary. Instead, they say, Smith agreed to donate \$100 to Carpenter's campaign if Carpenter wins the GOP primary, and Gulliver agreed to donate \$100 to Smith's campaign if he wins the primary. It is illegal under Oregon law for a candidate to bet on the outcome of a race, or for any person to bet to influence the result of an election.

Smith's is one of a spectrum of opinions about the role of partisanship and the president at the conference, about eight months ahead of the 2018 election, when state legislative races, congressional seats and the governor's seat will be up for grabs.

Meanwhile, the top Republican in statewide office urged attendees to identify as Oregonians before they identified as Republicans.

Oregon Secretary of State

SESSION



Former Trump campaign adviser and self-styled 'provocateur' Roger Stone was the headline speaker at Saturday's Dorchester Conference in Salem. He is shown with a conference attendee.



Capital Bureau/Claire Withycombe Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, talks with Oregon College Republicans Saturday at the Dorchester Conference.

Dennis Richardson told conference attendees in a speech Saturday morning that their identity as Oregonians should come before their identity as Republicans if they wanted their party to win.

Richardson speaks from experience: In 2016, Richardson was the first Republican to win statewide office since 2002, besting Democrat Brad Avakian, the state's labor commissioner.

"I would not be here unless I got Democratic votes, Green Party votes, Independent party of Oregon votes, Working

Family Party votes and votes from non-affiliated Oregonians," Richardson said. "And why? Because they wanted to elect somebody who would keep his promise to do that which was best for our state. I said when I was elected you wouldn't be able to tell if there was an 'R' or a 'D' behind my name, and I hope that you can see that I've tried to live up to that."

Smith, the gubernatorial candidate, also argues that Republicans can win statewide elections by homing on issues that voters in Portland care about, such as health care, education and homelessness

State Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, who is also jostling for the governor's mansion, also criticized focusing too much on the White House: He claimed in a speech that while he was solving local problems in the Legislature, Democratic Gov. Kate Brown was "fixated on divisive national politics.'

The Saturday-night headliner was former Trump campaign adviser and self-styled 'provocateur" Roger Stone, who gave a speech touting what he believes to be the accomplishments of the president and condemning Democrats.

He is a controversial figure who remains in the national limelight for his ties to Trump.

A former adviser to the campaign, which he parted ways with in August of 2015, Stone has also lobbied on Trump's behalf on Capitol Hill and says he urged the New York real estate tycoon to run for president first in 1988. Stone got his start in national politics working on Richard Nixon's Committee

To Re-Elect The President (CREEP)

Stone claimed the president brought African-American employment to the lowest level on record, said the president is committed to free trade, and celebrated the contributions of alternative rightwing media outlets and social media to Trump's campaign.

"The rise of a vibrant, robust alternative media, the rise of social media, Twitter, Facebook and so on, is what allowed for the election of an outsider candidate who the mainstream media sought to destroy," Stone said.

Stone also warned of what he described as a "tech left" that he believes seeks to censor right-wing perspectives on social media platforms.

The Atlantic reported last week that Stone had corresponded directly with radical-transparency organization WikiLeaks, which is suspected to have ties to Russia, before the 2016 election. The magazine reported Stone had told the committee under oath he'd corresponded with Wikileaks through an "intermediary.'

Stone, who on Saturday

dismissed what he called "the Russian collusion delusion,' told the magazine he provided the full exchange to the House Intelligence Committee, which is investigating whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia to undermine Trump's Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The main speaker Friday, Fox News commentator, author and radio host Kevin Jackson, likewise praised the president and lambasted "leftists."

"What a world you people created on Nov. 8, 2016," Jackson said, referring to the day Trump was elected president, to applause. "I'll never forget the look on those sissies' faces."

He disparaged feminists, prioritized the rights of American citizens first and "human beings second," and criticized the study of the humanities and social justice in the nation's colleges.

"I'm done with feminists," he said.

The chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Oregon, Jeanne Atkins, said in a statement earlier this week that the choice of speakers for the conference was "appalling."

"Republicans are increasingly out of touch with voters and their promotion of speakers who are known for hate speech and public deceit is frightening," Atkins said. Greg Astley, president of

the conference, defended the choice of speakers such as Jackson and Stone and said that the Dorchester Conference was a "big tent."

The value of the conference, he said, was that Oregonians from across the state could interact face-to-face with prominent figures, recalling how, attending the conference at 14, he met former Gov. Vic Atiyeh.

If attendees disagreed with a speaker's views, they could go talk to them directly or ask questions, Astley said.

"If we shut down all that kind of conversation, I don't think we'll be any better than the progressive far left," Astley said.

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would have on the state's small businesses.

the principles of "net neu- nounced the creation of a new trality." That means con- Joint Legislative Committee The bill was intended to tractors may not block, slow on Carbon Reduction. down or charge more for cer tain content.

also added

"Really, the session worked the way it should," said House Speaker Tina Kotek. "There were emerging issues. We dealt with them, and we did strategic investments for communities that needed some things. We balanced the budget. We also were able to take on some of the bigger issues facing the state.'

Republican leaders Rep. Mike McLane of Powell Butte, and Sen. Jackie Winters of Salem said the short session remains "broken."

"Oregonians sent us here to adjust budgets, make minor policy tweaks, and respond to emergencies. Instead, the majority party introduced significant partisan policy changes that were impossible to properly vet in such a short amount of time," they said in a joint statement. "While thankfully many of these bills failed to make it to the Governor's desk, it's hard to escape the reality that the short session is increasingly becoming more about political posturing than good policy making.

# Health care

Lawmakers passed two bills aimed at understanding the high price of prescription drugs and shining light on coordinated care organizations, which provide government-subsidized health care to indigent Oregonians through the state's version of Medicaid.

House Bill 4005 requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to disclose reasons for increases in the price of prescription drugs when the increase exceeds 10 percent.

House Bill 4018 makes public the meetings of the state's 15 CCOs and requires the organizations to give at least three months' notice before ending a contract Portland Tribune/Jaime Valdez

raised some concerns during

session over the impact it

The 2018 Oregon Legislative Assembly at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem. Legislative leaders Saturday celebrated several accomplishments this year and a marked increase in bipartisanship and efficiency.

with the state, an effort to on vetoing the bill. She stabilize the health care system.

# Guns

A bill to strip gun rights from convicted stalkers and intimate partners convicted of abuse passed both chambers. Known as closure of the "boyfriend" or "intimate partner" loophole, the fix was a priority of Gov. Kate Brown for this session.

## Housing

Lawmakers boosted revenue to fund affordable housing by raising the real estate document recording fee from \$20 to \$60. The fee is the state's only source of revenue dedicated to paying for affordable housing.

The increase is projected to generate an additional \$60 million every two years.

#### **Business taxes**

Lawmakers eliminated a federal deduction for businesses on state tax returns.

While the state's income tax code is largely tied to federal code, business owners with "pass-through" income on their personal income taxes will not be allowed to deduct up to 20 percent of their income in 2018.

It was unclear Saturday whether the governor plans

stem state revenue losses from federal tax reform late last year. The change is expected to result in \$244 million in tax dollars in the existing two-year budget than if the state had allowed the deduction.

# Net neutrality

State lawmakers have no authority to regulate internet companies. However, they can pass laws to use the state's buying power to encourage certain business practices.

In this case, they required that internet providers that contract with government entities in the state abide by

# Climate change

An ambitious proposal to enact a cap-and-invest program this year moved through the session without legislative action.

The program would have charged companies for emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and invested the proceeds into projects designed to offset global warming.

Kotek and Courtney said they want to pass the legislation next year during the Legislature's five-monthlong session. They also an-

Lawmakers \$1.4 million to the state budget as part of the budget reconciliation bill to create a carbon policy office in the state Department of Administrative Services.

## Health care

Portland Rep. Mitch Greenlick's third try to refer a constitutional amendment to voters to make access to affordable and effective health care a fundamental right was blocked in the Senate. Opponents were concerned about potential cost and litigation that could result from the constitutional provision.

