

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 60

# OWENS wants to represent the people, protect the rural way of life

Incumbent Crane farmer says bipartisanship is important for a successful representative

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

After being appointed as representative for Oregon's House District 60 in January, Mark Owens said he has worked to listen and be a voice for the people in the district and plans to continue that if re-elected in November.

Owens, who lives in Crane, said Harney County is what allowed him and his family to live the American dream. He met his wife and started his family in Harney County and bought his own farm there.

He said, while trying to make a living became harder due to a changing society, it drove him to get into public service.

"I got on the school board, I got on the planning commission and a lot of boards, and I started to feel that I could help with the correction to make Oregon more business friendly," Owens said.

When the state representative position became available, Owens, who was a Harney County commissioner at the time, said the position would give him a chance to develop as a leader and be a voice to the community and possibly make change, which is why he pursued the position.

He said an important aspect of being a representative is being a voice to the 73,000 people in House District 60 and making sure he can articulate their concerns during discussions on policy.

"My primary job as representative is to represent the people, maintain our custom and culture and try to protect our way of life," Owens said.

Some of the concerns expressed by constituents in District 60 were fires and the need for better land management, bringing money and jobs into the economy, government and state agencies running out of control, unemployment issues, permitting and licensing and lifting restrictions on schools, according to Owens.

He said the concerns are widespread and that House District 60 submitted 33 legislative concepts on concerns.

"It's been interesting, and it's a broader perspective than I thought it was originally going to be," Owens said. "A lot of it stems back to the desire and needs to have accountability



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Mark Owens, R-Crane, is the incumbent in the race for representative of Oregon's 60th House District.

ties in our agencies, make sure small businesses are not penalized and we become more business friendly."

COVID-19 presented another trial that raised concerns. Owens said COVID-19 is a real disease that needs to be taken seriously. However, he said Oregonians have allowed COVID-19 to run their lives through policy and action.

"We need to learn how to live with COVID and not have COVID live our lives," Owens said.

He said children and small businesses have been the most affected by the policy actions and restrictions. Owens said kids should have the chance to get back to school buildings, and it should be easier for small businesses to reopen.

"We still need to protect those that are vulnerable and those that are concerned," Owens said. "We still need to take precautions, but we've got to get back to some normalcy."

The partisan environment at the state capital does provide challenges, Owens said. He said, by nature, he is not a partisan person and was a county commissioner in a nonpartisan environment.

As commissioner he worked with many other commissioners and never knew if they were Republicans or Democrats.

"It didn't dawn on me until the first emergency session, we were down there and we had bipartisan support of liability coverage for schools," Owens said. "We had 10 Democratic representatives write a letter to the speaker, asking for the amendment, and the Republicans supported it. We had the votes to get it through the house ... but (Gov. Kate Brown) decided to pull it to leverage it for later."

Good policy needs to be

bipartisan and needs public participation, Owens said.

"Bipartisanship is huge, and it's probably the number one thing that would make me successful as a representative of



the district," Owens said. "You need to represent every person in your district regardless of their party affiliation, and in order to get that done, you've got to leave that partisanship at the door and become bipartisan in order to work successfully with everyone."

There are exceptions for bipartisanship such as specific moral and constitutional issues. He said he is pro-life, supports the Second Amendment and freedom of speech and said there are no grey areas for these topics.

Owens said people should vote for him because he is dedicated to serving the community of House District 60, he can continue to learn to be a voice of the community and he has the personality and tools to affect positive change.

"I think I can be successful in that environment in Salem more so than a lot of people, and if I didn't think I could promote positive change, I wouldn't be here," Owens said. "I have a real passion and desire to see our communities do better."

# SPELL hopes to give people a choice, vows to listen to everyone

Third-generation Grant County resident seeks new jobs to keep younger generations around

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Beth Spell has lived in Grant County all her life, with the exception of college and the beginning of her marriage, and she's now campaigning to be representative of Oregon's 60th House district as the Democratic nominee.

Spell's father and grandmother lived in Grant County all of their lives. Spell's great-grandparents moved to Grant County in the late 1860s.

"I am Grant County, born and raised, and very much feel that this is the land that I've been called to live in and try to make it as good a place as possible for people to live in," Spell said.



Contributed photo

Beth Spell, the Democratic nominee for Oregon House District 60, decided to run because she said people need a choice.

Spell said, as she goes further into the race, there have been a lot of issues that have been ignored. She said, by offering people a choice, she is offering them a different perspective.

Spell said the needs of Eastern Oregon don't seem to be communicated very well, and the prominent difference between the eastern and western sides of the state are their thoughts on what makes life livable.

"We need to develop a strategy and a style of communication so we can work with those people that are a majority of the population so our needs are met and we can meld the two different cultures to work together," Spell said.

Spell said Eastern Oregon needs family wage jobs so younger generations can stay and raise their families. New technology and new ideas would help make this possible, she said.

"We can't keep trying to move backwards to the ways things were when I was being raised in the '50s and '60s," Spell said. "Those jobs are gone, and they're probably not coming back just like the jobs we had 100 years ago — those are gone too. We need to look to the future."

Spell said, if elected, she will look at and investigate the concerns of the people regardless of their political affiliation because her job will be to represent everyone in District 60.

Spell said there has been significant conflict in Eastern

Oregon regarding how to deal with COVID-19.

"I think people need to listen to the scientists and the doctors and follow their recommendations and be careful," Spell said. "In a position of leadership, a leader should be encouraging people to follow guidelines and be careful and not take unnecessary risk."

She said almost everybody has a fragile person in their life, and to flaunt guidelines for personal freedom is putting friends and family in jeopardy. She added that the resistance has also prolonged the need for restrictions and mandates from the state.

"We can shorten the influence of the pandemic if we were more careful," Spell said.

Spell said she knows people are tired of the influence that COVID-19 has had on life, but the longer people fight it the longer the problem will persist.

Spell said people should vote for her because she will stay in the room during legislative sessions, and if the discussion gets hard, she is not going to leave because she is going to represent everybody in her district. She said she's a good listener determined to talk and work cooperatively with everyone. Spell is also the Working Families Party nominee. She said this party focuses on workers: child care opportunities, affordable housing, family wage jobs and more.

"Those are the things we need to work towards to make our community viable for the future," Spell said.

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