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Election

2020

Alex Spenser makes underdog run for 2nd Congressional District

Klamath Falls Democrat calls for 'path to unity'

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

Alex Spenser, a writer and political campaign strategist from Klamath Falls, is the Democratic candidate for the 2nd Congressional District.

Spenser's political role in the past has been behind the scenes. She coached Jamie McLeod-Skinner, the CD2 Democratic nominee in 2018, on public speaking and debates. Spenser had signed on as 2020 campaign manager for Raz Mason of The Dalles.

When Mason dropped out before the primary for personal reasons, Spenser jumped in and ran herself. She won the May 19 primary with 32.1% of the vote, outpacing her nearest challenger, Central Point business consultant Nick Heuertz, by 797 votes.

A native of Dallas, Texas, Spenser earned an associate degree in biology from Richland College in Dallas and studied English at Texas A&M University in College Station. She moved west, working at Lava Beds National Monument and Death Valley National Park.

Spenser has lived in Klamath Falls for 10 years. A single mom, she has homeschooled her daughter to the fifth grade.

Spenser says she wants to go to Congress to help unify the country after four years of divisiveness under President Donald Trump and his Republican allies in Congress.

"We need a path to unity," Spenser said in a statement for the 2020 Voters Pamphlet.

The coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 212,000 Americans this year has upended the way lawmakers should approach their jobs, Spenser said.

"The 'COVID-19 Revolution' that has been thrust upon us has left us needing leadership-leaders willing to stay in the room and do the hard work of communication," she said.

Spenser said the pandemic has shown the need for universal health care so that all Americans can get treatment for the virus, not just those able to use influence or money to get top doctors and medicines.

"We need health care as a matter of good government infrastructure," she said. "Just as good government

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Alex Spenser

Cliff Bentz plans to take lessons learned in Oregon to Congress

Republican contender hopes GOP-held Senate, presidency will provide leverage in House

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

With U.S. Rep. Greg Walden retiring, voters in rural Oregon will elect a new leader to Congress for the first time in over two decades.

Former state Sen. Cliff Bentz, who won a crowded Republican primary in May, will face Democrat Alex Spenser for the open seat to represent Oregon's 2nd Congressional District.

Based on the demographics of the historically conservative district, Bentz is the frontrunner.

Bentz, a lawyer from Ontario, served 10 years in

the state's House of Representatives in District 60. He resigned in 2018 after being appointed to Oregon's Senate District 30. He stepped down from that seat earlier this year to campaign full time.

Bentz played an instrumental role in 2017 by getting Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature to come together to pass a landmark \$5.3 billion trans-

portation package. The bill included taxes and fees to fund congestion-reducing projects, highway and bridge improvements and transit projects across the state.

Bentz said he learned some valuable lessons about bipartisanship.

"The party in power has to be in some fashion motivated to work with a party that's not in power," Bentz said.

Bentz was one of 11 lawmakers to leave the state last year after negotiations with Democrats broke

down over a proposed climate bill. He continued working on climate legislation from March through December of last year — including 16 round-trip flights from Boise to Portland and another seven by car — but said he was "frozen out" of the climate change discussions in December. He said, despite the expertise he brought to the talks, Democrats kept him out solely because he was a conservative.

"They couldn't bring a bill into the committee and keep all of their environmental organizations with them if a Republican helped put it together," he said. "Didn't matter if I was Einstein."

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Cliff Bentz



EOMG file photo

Trees are logged in an Oregon forest with a feller-buncher. Oregon's Board of Forestry has voted to proceed with a habitat conservation plan analysis opposed by the timber industry.

Oregon to proceed with 'habitat conservation plan' process

Plan would absolve ODF from liability for incidental take

By Mateusz Perkowski
EO Media Group

Oregon forest regulators have unanimously rejected the timber industry's arguments against moving forward with a "habitat conservation plan" for several protected species on state forestlands.

On Oct. 6, the Oregon Board of Forestry voted in favor of proceeding with an environmental analysis of the plan, which timber advocates wanted to prevent due to fears of reduced logging and harm to rural economies.

The habitat conservation plan, or HCP, would aim to mitigate harm to 16 species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act or could gain federal protection.

However, the plan would absolve the Oregon Department of Forestry, which manages the forestlands, from liability for "incidental take" — the killing of protected species or destruction of their habitat.

Currently, ODF manages the affected 640,000 acres to avoid incidental take, which the HCP anticipates will be tougher to do in the future.

Representatives of the timber industry and rural communities argue the plan is too restrictive compared to similar HCPs on private and public property elsewhere in the Northwest.

"Do I care about endangered species? Yes, but there is already so much ground set aside for that now," said Mike Pihl, a logger from Vernonia and president of the Timber Unity group, which advocates on behalf of rural communities.

Much of Oregon's forestland is under federal ownership and effectively cannot be logged, while the state also has extensive regulations for harvesting timber on state and private lands, he said.

"We already have tons of protection in place," Pihl said.

The plan ignores the economic and social needs of rural communities while taking a hands-off approach to management that has led to fire danger and other problems on federal property, said Rex Storm, lobbyist for the Association of Oregon Loggers.

"This HCP would repeat the failures of federal forest management, which are un-

ceptable to us," Storm said.

Under the ODF's interpretation, logging would initially decline under the HCP but the plan would eventually result in a larger volume of timber harvest over 75 years compared to the current "take avoidance strategies."

The agency claims the HCP will provide "increased certainty" compared to other forest management methods, which will also likely result in reduced logging as more species are listed and more acreage must be protected.

The Oregon Forest & Industries Council, which represents the timber industry, counters that the HCP sets aside too much forestland for conservation without taking into account the adverse impacts to the threatened spotted owl from the more aggressive barred owl.

The organization also worries that ODF's data models and logging projections are flawed, which will result in greater-than-anticipated restrictions on timber harvest when the HCP is implemented.

"We have a lack of confidence in the harvest numbers," said Seth Barnes, OFIC's forest policy director.

Representatives of state and federal agencies, which have been developing the HCP since 2017, testified in support of conducting a federally required environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Only after that NEPA evaluation is complete in mid-2022 will the Board of Forestry decide whether to implement the plan.

The HCP will reconcile competing demands for wildlife habitat, clean water, timber revenues and other public values, said Paul Henson, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's state supervisor for Oregon.

The plan "does the most benefit for the greatest group of folks," he said.

Members of the Board of Forestry ultimately agreed with proponents of the HCP, voting 6-0 to proceed with the NEPA analysis at the conclusion of the Oct. 6 online hearing.

The environmental analysis will provide more

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Half a pound of meth, cash and vehicle seized Oct. 2

Lucas, Bryan arrested on multiple charges

Blue Mountain Eagle

Nearly a half-pound of methamphetamine was seized Oct. 2 in Grant County.

The Grant County Interagency Narcotics Team seized the drugs, cash and a vehicle the afternoon of Oct. 2 during drug operations, according to a press release from Undersheriff Zach Mobley.

Brandie Lucas, 44, of Long Creek was arrested for delivery of methamphet-

amine, possession of methamphetamine, criminal conspiracy to deliver methamphetamine and manufacture of methamphetamine, according to the release.

Kenzon Bryan, 53, was also arrested for delivery of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine and criminal conspiracy to deliver methamphetamine.

The press release states the case is ongoing and more information will be released in the future.



Kenzon Bryan



Brandie Lucas



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