

Lineups for primaries are set

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's political merry-go-round spun ever faster Wednesday, March 9, as the lineup of 2022 candidates rolled out and the chair of the Oregon Republican Party resigned with a torrid denouncement that "communist psychological warfare tactics are being used daily within the party."

When the 5 p.m. filing deadline passed on March 8, 390 people had filed to run for an array of offices on the May 17 primary ballots, along with 29 who have signed up for the general election on Nov. 8.

"For those of you who are first-time candidates, you are about to embark on the strangest job interview you have ever had," Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said Tuesday night as the window to run in May closed.

The list included a platoon of 41 candidates for governor, inspired by an election which won't feature a current or former governor on the ballot for the first time since 2002. Gov. Kate Brown was barred from running by term limits.

No major new candidates filed in the final hours, with former House Speaker Tina Kotek of Portland and Treasurer Tobias Read the headliners among Democrats. Republicans include former House Minority Leader Christine Drazan of Canby, 2016 governor nominee Bud Pierce of Salem, 1998 governor nominee Bill Sizemore of Redmond and Sandy Mayor Stan Pulliam. All seek to get a shot at becoming the first GOP winner for the top job since Vic Atiyeh in 1982.

Former Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, who grew up in Bend and Redmond, plans to bypass the primaries to run

as an unaffiliated candidate in November.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, will seek another six-year term. He faces two Democrats in the May primary and if he wins in May, the victor among seven Republicans.

GOP leader makes bitter exit

The intra-party battles of the primaries were jump-started by the sudden, angry resignation of Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, as chair of the Oregon Republican Party with a long tirade against internal GOP enemies he said had "broken my spirit."

"My physical and spiritual health can no longer survive exposure to the toxicity that can be found in this community," Heard said in a statement. "We truly have an equal if not greater evil than the Democrats walking among us. Communist psychological warfare tactics are being used daily within the party."

Heard will retain his seat in the Senate, where he has been removed from the floor of the Senate during sessions in 2021 and 2022 for refusing to wear a mask as required under the state's COVID-19 emergency rules.

GOP state Vice Chair Herman Baertschiger, a Josephine County commissioner and former leader of the Senate Republican Caucus, said he will fill in until a new election for chair is organized. Sen. Dennis Linthicum, R-Klamath Falls, a Heard ally, remains party treasurer.

Late out and ins

Was in, now out: Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, let the deadline pass without filing for re-election. Two Democratic insiders jumped into the race in the final 30 hours. Smith Warner sent an email on Monday afternoon to "constit-



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The candidate field for the May 17 primary election for state and federal offices in Oregon is set after the March 8 filing deadline.

uents" saying she wouldn't be running, according to a report in Willamette Week. No public announcement was made before the window to run in the primary for the heavily Democratic district was closed.

Was out, now in: Former Rep. Cheri Helt, R-Bend, filed March 8 — the last day — to run for the nonpartisan commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries job. It's one of the four executive positions in Oregon government, along with governor, secretary of state, and treasurer. Helt faces six other candidates including Yamhill County Commissioner Casey Kulla and Portland attorney Christina Stephenson, who has won early labor union support.

Out, move, in: Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, had announced he wouldn't seek re-election to his seat in House District 31, in the northwest of the state. He noted the increased percentage of Republicans within the boundaries following redistricting for the 2022 election.

Witt made a surprise move March 7, announcing he would try to stay in the House, moving to Salem and running for the open House District 19 seat being vacated by Rep. Raquel

Moore-Green, R-Salem, who is running for the Senate.

Capitol Hill hopes

Oregon now has six congressional seats, one more than the previous decade, awarded to the state for population growth. There will be at least one new member of Congress representing the new 6th Congressional District around the Salem area. Three House members are among the nine Democrats and seven Republicans trying to jump from Salem to Washington, D.C.

Of the five other races, the main attraction so far has been the 5th Congressional District, which now stretches from Portland, over the Cascades, to Bend. Several forecasters have said it's the race with the most near-even split among Democratic and Republican leaning voters. Both party's primaries are shaping up into slugfests.

U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby, is the official incumbent in the much realigned district. Former congressional and secretary of state candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner has attracted progressives to her bid to oust Schrader in May.

The winner will move onto the general election among five

candidates in the GOP primary.

Most of the money and attention have been going to two well-financed candidates from opposite ends of the district.

Former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer lives near the northeast most end of the district, while Bend businessman Jimmy Crumpacker is at the southeastern end in Bend, where he made an unsuccessful 2020 bid for the 2nd Congressional District seat. Both are aligned with supporters of former President Donald Trump.

One factor likely to come up in several of the congressional races is residency. Unlike legislative seats, candidates for the U.S. House do not have to live in the district where they are running, just the state.

Some candidates in the 6th district race are from the Portland area, while DeRemer and McLeod-Skinner live just beyond the boundaries of the 5th District.

Will it matter? It's a question of whether the official OK from the U.S. Constitution translates clearly during the bare-knuckle fights of the primaries.

Candidate cull coming

The list of candidates could shift somewhat in coming days. The Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office will review all filings and could also disqualify candidates who filed for offices who falsify names or other information. They can also be removed for failing to meet residency, age and other requirements. Candidates who filed have until Friday to withdraw from a race.

While the filing list is the total of those who signed up to run, a better indicator of the level of competition can be found at the campaign financing web pages of the Secretary of State's Office.

Candidates for state offices who plan to raise and spend money must take a separate step to create or revise a campaign finance committee with the secretary of state.

Candidates for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House races must file with the Federal Elections Commission, which has different rules and limits than Oregon's nearly "everything goes" campaign financing.

One is the loneliest number — unless it is you

Late redistricting and incumbent uncertainties have led to some bald spots on the ballot.

A preliminary analysis of the filings by John Horvick, political director of DHM Research in Portland, showed nine House districts had only one party's candidate filed to run.

Rep. Boomer Wright, R-Reedsport, is running unopposed in House District 9, where Horvick calculated the 29% of voters who are registered Republicans will decide the area's lone candidate to move on to the general election.

Only one senator gets a solo, Horvick reported.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, has no primary or general election opponent in Senate District 4. The 36% of voters who are registered Democrats are eligible to vote in the May 17 primary.

Democrats currently hold a 37-22 majority in the House, where all 60 seats are on the ballot.

Democrats hold 18 Senate seats. All 12 of the other senators were elected as Republicans, but only 10 now officially belong to the GOP caucus.

Normally, half the 30 Senate seats would be up for a four-year term, but resignations and appointments have jumped the number to 16 this year.

Court

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After John Day disbanded its police department in October, the job of enforcing the law within the city limits fell to the Grant County Sheriff's Office, which has four patrol deputies to cover the entire county.

On many occasions, Sheriff Todd McKinley has said he needs additional deputies to provide adequate coverage. However, the Grant County Court and John Day City Council have yet to settle on the terms of a funding agreement.

Rowell, along with Palmer, has met to discuss the issue informally with McKinley and City Councilors Gregg Haberly and Heather Rookstool.

Rowell said the county needs to move past "particular issues" with John Day and work to fund law enforcement in an efficient and economically sound way.

Rowell concedes that the "how" is a big question with no easy answers.

Rowell said the county needs to get options on the table for all of the cities in the county to mull over.

"That's the only way I know how to go about it," Rowell said. "Because it appears that there's a stalemate between the city (John Day) and the county right now."

Rowell said that those in smaller communities such as Dayville may not be able to afford to pay for coverage like the more populated cities. The point, he said, is to bring people in from those communities to find out what they want.

"We need to get the alternatives on the table and find out what we can," Rowell said. "If it is going out for a bond levy, then maybe that's what we have to do. But I'd like to hear the input from everybody on this point."

Beyond the policing debate, Rowell said he would like to make information about projects, grants and other county activities more easily accessible for constituents. He said the county is already posting that information, but it's not always easy to find or understand.

Rowell said he would especially like to see information on the county's website about its grants from the state and federal government. For example, how many grants does the county have, what is the status of each grant and what is the grant amount?

"Grants come from the

High God," he said. "I just feel that we're driving inflation. We're driving everything with money that we don't have, is my opinion."

He said the federal and state governments distribute the money for the grants, and that money comes with restrictions on how it can be spent. Then, he said, the county issues the money with strings attached.

"My opinion is that it's the people's money and they can dictate the behavior," he said. "They can dictate changes with money."

He said this became an issue when he was required to wear a mask during a County Court session. Rowell said Grant County Judge Scott Myers told him the county could lose state and federal funding if it were to flout pandemic protocols such as masking mandates.

"That should be the county's decision," he said, "not a state decision. I'm a more of a home rule kind of guy."

Rowell said he wants to push these issues with representatives at the state and federal levels.

"That's one of the issues I have. What can I do about it? I've got to live with it," he said. "But I can push it upstream."

Scott Knepper

Scott Knepper, a Prairie City resident who said he has had ties to Grant County since 1968, is a retired postal employee who now works as a substitute teacher. Knepper said he had been waiting for the right opportunity to run for a seat on the court for a decade. He said now was the right time, with no incumbent in the race.

According to Knepper, population decline is one of the most significant issues Grant County faces.

"The kids grow up here, and there is no education here to speak of past high school," he said. "And they go elsewhere and they never come back, and then there's a drain on the community and all of the young people leave."

Additionally, Knepper points out, the economy is dependent primarily on federal agencies, such as the Forest Service. He said he wants to see the county work more aggressively with the federal government to bring more jobs to the county. Knepper said Palmer would be an excellent liaison to the federal government if he is elected to the Senate.

Knepper said he pledges to have at least one community meeting in each city in Grant County every year to get smaller communities involved in county issues.

Knepper said people are inherently more concerned about their "own backyard."

He pointed out that Grant County is five times the size of Rhode Island with a lot of unpopulated space between cities, and he wants to try to bring people together.

A routine background investigation revealed that Knepper has had two convictions for driving under the influence of intoxicants. Both were in Multnomah County, one in 1992 and the other in 2006.

Knepper noted that both convictions were from many years ago and said he didn't think they would prevent him from doing a good job as a county commissioner.

Mark Webb

Mark Webb, the executive director of Blue Mountains Forest Partners, is no stranger to local politics, having previously

served as Grant County judge. Webb said he decided to throw his hat in the ring for a commissioner's seat after the filing deadline when he announced Monday, March 14, his intention to run as a write-in candidate.

Webb said several factors prompted him to jump into the race. First, he said that elected officials at the county level have significant opportunities to advocate for the county if they work with federal and state partners.

The County Court's work with the Blue Mountains Intergovernmental Council has been a good start, he said.

The BIC, which came together after the Forest Service scrapped its draft land management plan for several East-

ern Oregon national forests after more than a decade of working through revisions, recently completed its recommendation for desired conditions on the forests.

However, Webb said, Grant County is further along in the process than other Eastern Oregon counties and needs to start working with Forest Service officials on the management plan for the Malheur National Forest.

Instead of waiting for other counties to get on board, Webb said, the county needs to invest in its own needs. Those needs, according to Webb, are ensuring stability for natural resource jobs on the forest and ensuring the forest's environmental sustainability.

Getting there, Webb said, is

going to entail working with the Forest Service to draft the new forest management plan.

With the annual volume of commercial logging on the Malheur National Forest dipping from 75 million board feet to 55 million board feet under the new stewardship contract that will be awarded later this year, Webb said the county should work to increase the cut by addressing the forest plan.

From his perspective, Webb said, it makes more sense to work with the Forest Service to achieve a desired outcome than to butt heads with the federal agency.

"It's not just about small government," he said. "It's about responsible government."

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