

Drazan rolls campaign into Heppner

BY DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER

Hermiston Herald

Christine Drazan rolled her campaign to become Oregon's first Republican governor in 40 years into Heppner on Wednesday, Aug. 17, for an ice cream social.

The event at the Christian Life Center drew several dozen people and some public officials, including Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack and fellow Republicans state Reps. Greg Smith, Heppner, and Bobby Levy, Echo.

"Getting involved in public service in the first place for me was about service," Drazan explained, sitting for an interview within the chapel of the Christian Life Center. "It was really about the opportunity to make a difference and be effective. What I learned as a legislator was that my opportunity to really change outcomes, which is really what defines effectiveness for me, was really limited."

Drazan, 50, served in the Oregon House of Representatives 2019-22 for District 39, which includes parts of Clackamas County. She also was minority leader until 2021, when she left the state House to run for governor.

"As Republican leader, my caucus members proposed a hundred amendments to various pieces of legislation, and repeatedly it was on party line vote, rejected," she said.

With Democrats holding a supermajority in the Legislature, she said, Republicans have few tools to stop proposals they opposed. It became clear, she explained, there was not going to be an opportunity for her as a Republican legislator in Oregon to work on big issues. But the governor's office offers just that.

"The governor's role is so critical and so important to provide



Oregon Republican gubernatorial nominee Christine Drazan on Aug. 17, 2022, highlights approaches on how to begin fixing homelessness across Oregon at the Christian Life Center in Heppner.



Oregon Republican gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan, right, on Aug. 17, 2022, greets State Rep. Bobby Levy at the "Get the Scoop" ice cream social fundraiser at the Christian Life Center in Heppner.

balance and accountability," Drazan said. "In single party control,

if you're in a state with only one party everywhere you look, you

really don't have the kind of accountability that I think Oregonians want right now."

She criticized the "one size fits all" approach in Oregon government. Some rules and expectations that might be workable and culturally aligned in the more metro and suburban parts of our state instead affect the ability of rural Oregonians to support their families and lives.

To get to Mahonia Hall, Drazan has to defeat Democrat Tina Kotek, who served as the speaker of the Oregon House 2013-22, and Betsy Johnson, a longtime Democratic Oregon legislator now running an unaffiliated campaign.

As part of her campaign's "Roadmap for Oregon's Future,"

a six-page list of issues and proposed solutions she would implement as governor, Drazan described a series of "political agendas and bureaucratic hurdles" that interfere with Oregon's agricultural community.

"Sometimes we're talking about banning the equipment that they use in the fields, like diesel bans," she said.

Drazan has also been vocal about her support for changing Oregon's education system, citing a low overall high school graduation rate (80.6%) as a mandate for change. According to Drazan's "Roadmap," this includes focusing on academic accountability and "keeping politics out of the classroom." She said graduation requirements

that were rolled back during the pandemic should be reinstated.

"I believe that those were positive, not negative for our kids, and that our expectations should be higher, not lower," she said.

And students who are members of minorities already face numerous cultural and social challenges, she said, and while there have been leaders focused on addressing some of the social and emotional dynamics within schools, they failed to actually help those students obtain an education.

"The thing that we cannot possibly do is then also put them into a position where they don't even have a strong education on the other side of this," Drazan said. "We need kids to be able to have a level playing field and raise up all kids."

Pivoting to Oregon's homelessness problem, Drazan has stated publicly she would declare a state of emergency on homelessness. She said she would prioritize repealing Measure 110, which rescheduled and legalized small amounts of narcotics. She said the measure is one of the many factors that contribute to Oregon's homelessness problem.

And merely amending the "regulatory environment specifically around housing" she said, does not address the holistic problem of homelessness.

"Frankly, if we have a challenge around our land use system, let's tackle it," Drazan said. "If it's affecting our ability to be responsive to homelessness, it's probably affecting our ability to be responsive in other issues."

Drazan campaigned all week in Eastern Oregon, including stops at Burns, Ontario, Baker City, John Day and Fossil. Heppner was the last place on this swing.

GOP hopes stoked in Oregon as party hits West Coast low

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

A new election forecast says there's wobble in Democrats' 40-year hold on the Oregon governor's office, even as Republicans hit a historic low point along the West Coast.

The Center for Politics at the University of Virginia on Thursday, Aug. 18, moved the Nov. 8 race for Oregon governor from "Leans Democratic" to "Toss-Up."

"This is despite the state's blue lean and the fact that Republicans have not won a gubernatorial race there since 1982," wrote Kyle Kondik, the center's managing editor.

The key change is the near certainty of a three-way race for governor that might trip up Democrats seeking to hold onto a job last held by a Republican when Vic Atiyeh won a second term 40 years ago.

Former Democratic State Senator Betsy Johnson of Columbia County turned in nominating petitions with over 48,000 signatures on Tuesday — more than twice the minimum needed to get on the Nov. 8 ballot as an unaffiliated candidate.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan has until Aug. 30 to verify a random sampling of petition signatures in time to officially add Johnson to the general election alongside Democrat Tina Kotek of Portland and Republican Christine Drazan of Canby.

"The race sets up an unusual situation where the winner may not need to crack even 40%," Kondik wrote.

THREE CANDIDATES — AND NO 'CENTRIST' NOMINATION

Much of the election debate has centered around who Johnson would most hurt, Kotek or Drazan. All three served as late as last year in the legislative lead-



Jaime Valdez/Pamplin Media, File

Republican nominee Christine Drazan, left, and unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson, right, listens to Democratic nominee Tina Kotek speak during a governor's debate July 29, 2022, that the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association hosted at Mount Hood Oregon Resort in Welches.

ership. Kotek as House speaker, Drazan as House minority leader, and Johnson as a swing-vote Democrat and co-chair of the budget-writing Joint Ways & Means Committee. All left office early to run for governor — with Johnson also dropping her Democratic party affiliation of 20 years.

Adding to the scrambled election math is a decision by leaders of the Independent Party of Oregon — known as the IPO — to forego an alliance with one of the candidates.

"There will be no cross-nomination on this one," Independent Party board member Andrew Kaza of Redmond said Aug. 18.

A cross-nomination by the self-described "centrist" Independent Party is usually used by a candidate as symbolic of being the less partisan choice in a race.

So far in 2022, the Independent Party has cross-nominated 52 candidates for federal, state, and local offices. Cross-nominations were awarded to U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, and two Democratic candidates for open U.S. House seats: Terrebonne attorney Jamie McLeod-Skinner in the 5th Congressional District and Rep. Andrea Salinas of Lake Oswego in the 6th district.

The Independent Party of Oregon has heavily favored Democrats in 2022. Still, Sen. Bill Kenemer, R-Oregon City, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Vale, are among five GOP candidates to win the IPO nod.

Kaza said Independent Party leaders are free to announce their personal preferences. But no one in the governor's race will be able to have the party's identification added to their ballot line that a cross-nomination would allow.

The Center for Politics forecast said the undulating national political scene and three strong candidates was enough to put a question mark next to the Democrats' historic win streak for the Oregon governorship.

"Outgoing Gov. Kate Brown (D) is deeply unpopular, and there may be some desire for change in the Beaver State," Kondik wrote. "Johnson, the independent, would still be the most surprising winner, and Kotek and Drazan both will be working to try to prevent their voters from flocking to her banner."

Two other major national forecasters — the Cook Political Report and FiveThirtyEight — have previously moved the Oregon governor's race from a likely Democratic win to the less certain leaning Democratic victory.

GOP MISSES EARLY CHANCE TO END WEST COAST SHUTOUT

The Oregon election speculation came on the heels of Washington voters earlier this month ensuring the official end of a 56-year winning streak by Republicans for the office of Washington secretary of state. The Aug. 2 Washington state primary cemented Democrats' hold on every executive state office on the West Coast states of California, Oregon and Washington.

Kim Wyman, a Republican, won a third four-year term as Washington secretary of state in 2020, retaining the office held by the GOP since the 1964 election. In 2021, she resigned to accept an appointment by President Joe Biden to oversee federal election security efforts.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee appointed Washington Sen. Steve Hobbs, a fellow Democrat, to the position.

"This is pretty surreal for me," Hobbs said when sworn in last November.

What was surrealistic for Hobbs was infuriating to state Republicans. Unlike Oregon, Washington did not have a law requiring that the governor appoint a replacement from the same party.

GOP officials said the interruption in the line of Republicans in the office would be swiftly reversed with the special election in 2022 to fill out the remainder of Wyman's term.

Washington uses a system that includes an open primary. The top two candidates, regardless of party affiliation, would advance to the Nov. 8 general election.

Seven candidates, including three Republicans, ran against Hobbs in the primary.

Hobbs finished with 40% of the vote. In the scrum of others, unaffiliated candidate Julie Anderson finished second with 13%.

There would be no Republican on the ballot. Anderson, the Pierce County auditor, would be the first secretary of state without a party affiliation to win the office since 1896.

Hobbs would be the first Democrat to hold the office since Victor Aloysius Meyers, described by the Seattle Times as a "former Depression-era jazz-band leader" lost his bid for a third term in 1964.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was the last statewide Republican officeholder in California, leaving office in 2011.

Secretary of State Dennis Richardson was the last Republican elected to statewide office in Oregon, winning the 2016 election, but dying in office in 2019.

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