

# Common ground is the most uncommon

Politics descended on Seaside last week as Republican gubernatorial primary hopeful Jeff Smith swung through to meet local party leaders. Smith, who grew up in a cattle ranch in Elgin — “a couple miles outside of La Grande” in Eastern Oregon — is one of nine Republicans seeking to unseat Gov. Kate Brown. He’s making his first bid for public office, although he did serve as an alternate delegate for the 2008 Republican Party primary.

“Barack Obama demolished Sen. McCain in Oregon,” Smith said in a visit to the Signal office. “After that I started analyzing Oregon politics. It’s something I’ve been thinking about for about 10 years. I think I’ve got a thinking man’s strategy to how to approach politics in Oregon.”

The answer: You have to be competitive in Multnomah County, home to one out of every five registered voters in the state.

“You have to be willing to listen to people who have a different way of doing things than the people in the eastern part of the state, or many people out here, too,” Smith said, referring to the North Coast. “You have to look for things people really are willing to build common ground on.”

Fighting special interests, ending homelessness, battling the drug epidemic, reducing government waste and skyrocketing health care costs, are among those. “Everybody’s suffering from the high costs of medical care,” Smith said.

Unfortunately, he acknowledged, some issues have no common ground.

On gun control: “I don’t think that’s a winning issue for me,” he said.

Marijuana: “I don’t think there’s any common ground to be had with the way marijuana laws



SEEN FROM SEASIDE  
R.J. MARX

are now.”

Endangered species: “You can’t find anybody in Eastern Oregon who doesn’t have a strong viewpoint about wolves. And the people in Multnomah County have the completely opposite view. There’s no middle ground on that.”

Smith recognizes that a Republican has not held the governor’s office in Oregon in 36 years.

“I’m going to try to persuade people to jump on my strategy: you have to listen to people in Multnomah County,” he said. “To win, you have to suck some of those people onto your platform. You have to find things people are concerned about and that we have common ground about. Guns are not one of them. Wolves are not one of them.”

## Divided America

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley’s term does not come due for two more years. But during Senate recess, he came to Seaside Feb. 20 for a Clatsop County Town Hall at the Bob Chisholm Community Center.

Like GOP gubernatorial hopeful Smith, the cost of health care is at the top of Merkley’s to-do list.

But so are no-go discussion topics like rights for immigrants raised in this country known as “Dreamers,” environmental protections and gun control. And while both sides may agree on cutting health care costs, it’s unlikely conversation would lead to similar paths to accomplish that.

As Merkley spoke, members of the crowd held up signs that read “AGREE” or “DISAGREE.”

In the wake of the Parkland,



GOP gubernatorial hopeful Jeff Smith in Seaside.

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**Jeff Smith**  
Republican gubernatorial hopeful

Florida, shooting of 17 children at Marjory Stoneman High School, frustration boiled over.

When a proposal to ban assault weapons came up, the audience showed near-unanimous agreement. “Please do more,” begged one audience member.

Opposition to EPA chief Scott Pruitt’s environmental deregulation policy and a plea for immigrants also united the senator and constituents.

Despite the consensus within the community center, the elephant in the room was definitely



Jeff Merkley speaks to the audience at the Feb. 20 town hall in Seaside.

outside the room.

“I do hear tremendous organizing energy around the country from people who say we’re way off track right now,” Merkley said. “I really want to see a majority of the House and Senate to stop bad policy and to start the path moving forward.”

There is a yin and yang in American politics, Merkley said. “If Trump is the yin, I’m hoping there’s a whole lot of ‘yang’ coming.”

## The path ahead

Parade? No parade? Wall? No wall? Kneel? Not to kneel?

We’re going to have to confront some of those “unbridgeable” topics before we find resolution.

Sometimes it feels like a Civil War has already begun. Not just Democrat versus GOP or Eastern Oregon pitted against Multnomah County, but right here, in the Safeway parking lot where the Prius with the “Black Lives Matter” bumper sticker sits parked next to a pickup truck with the Confederate flag displayed in the back of the cab.

The question now: Who is going to blink first?

# Snow on the roof, fire in the belly

Moving to the Oregon coast from New York and being neither a skier or snowboarder, I never imagined I’d see the day when I’d say I was glad to see snow on the ground.

Nevertheless it was joy I felt last Thursday after a couple of inches piled up.

After making myself a cup of coffee, I went outside with the dogs. The very old one, Rinaldo the blind Chihuahua, was having trouble, slip sliding around. Basil, the lame Lhasa Apso, was excited. He’s always been a fan of cold weather. Lucy, the miniature pinscher who was born here and is only two years old, was confused. I threw a ball for her, but she wasn’t sure if she was supposed to like snow or not.

I’m not going to lie. New York winters are rough enough to be scarring. They involve shovels and snowplows, and sometimes backhoes to move the piles of snow when they pile up too much. Our New York house had a long steep driveway. I fell down in it a lot. Some winters it snowed multiple times a week and since plowing is costly, if there was less than four inches we advised our plow guy not to plow, in which case we’d shovel it off ourselves. Great exercise for the quads and glutes, but still backbreaking work.

Still, there was a certain glory Thursday morning at the sight of snow on the beach and on the mountain. I don’t think I’ve ever seen Tillamook Head so frosted. While I was standing in my front yard near the Cove, soaking up the sun, a guy rode past on his bicycle dressed in a wet suit and carrying a surfboard.

Not a sight I’d be likely to see ever, not ever, in New York.

That made me smile.



VIEW FROM THE PORCH  
EVE MARX

## Bottoms up

There’s a saying that where there’s snow on the roof, there’s a fire in the belly, which is why I’ve been drinking Firebrew since the new year started. It’s a vinegar based immune booster. I work alone from home and frankly don’t expose myself to a lot of people. I’ve quit going to the gym. Instead I take solitary walks outdoors with only a dog for company. I don’t have kids in school to bring home viruses. I rarely take public transportation. Besides my regular attendance at the local coffee shops, the thing that exposes me most to other people is hanging out at WineKraft in Astoria where my husband’s jazz quartet plays once a month. At the Sweet Shop in Gearhart, I stumbled on a product called Fire Brew, purported to be an immune booster. This particular product is made in Portland. It’s a tonic said to strengthen the immune system naturally. Slug down a tablespoon or two once or twice a day, or add it to water, hot water, or your favorite beverage. The young man who sold me the flavor labeled citrus told me he pours his in Red Bull. The ingredients are organic apple cider vinegar, raw honey, horseradish, turmeric, ginger, onion, garlic, habanero peppers, apples, oranges, lemon, pineapple, rosemary, echinacea and rosehips. The first time I tried it, it was poured into a plastic shot glass, and I threw it back like a shot



A little Fire Brew and memories of snowy winters.

of alcohol. I’ve thrown back shots of whiskey and tequila that burned less.

I will report that after 72 hours of dosing myself with this potent mixture (chased by 6 ounces of water for every shot), a phlegmy cough that threatened to become something worse didn’t. I decided to quaff this brew every day for the duration of February, and if the ground hog is correct and there really is going to be six more weeks of winter, I’ll drink it for six weeks.

Standing in full sun in my bathrobe and tall rubber boots sipping a shot glass of Pomegranate Fire Brew last week, I thought that despite all the bad news — school shootings, the Russian investigation — I could still feel enchanted by a few inches of glittering snow.

Just not too often.

## LETTERS

### Candidate says no coastal drilling

This letter is to declare that as a candidate for the State House representing District 32, I will vigorously oppose any attempt on the part of the Federal government to drill for oil and gas on the north Oregon Coast. Such efforts are the height of irresponsibility on the part of leaders in terms of the local economy, trends in the energy industry and our duties as stewards of the environment.

I am old enough to remember the damage coastal oil drilling caused in 1969 on the beaches of Santa Barbara, California, and more recently with the Deepwater Horizon explosion on the Gulf Coast. I believe the risks are too great, the costs too high and our pristine Oregon coast far too valuable to justify drilling for oil. Moreover, the governor of Florida was successful recently in pleading a waiver from the President on drilling in his state. Our coastline is just as worthy of protection.

No state should have to endure potential environmental catastrophe merely because of partisan favoritism, or worse, the economic self-interest of a president who is an owner of tourism-based interests in the Sunshine State. The owner of Mar-a-Lago, has aligned himself with dirty, 19th century energy production, drastically rolled back Federal incentives for alternative energy and denied the human contribution to the destructive effects of global warming.

I seek office in part to change the trends in our country. District 32 includes Seaside, Cannon Beach, Rockaway Beach, Bay City, Warrenton and Astoria, and providence has blessed us with beautiful, inspiring,

tourism-dollar generating ocean beaches and sea life. However, if as stewards of the planet we fail to protect, water, land and air to the detriment of our descendants, history will judge us harshly.

I say, “not on my watch.”

**John F. Orr**  
Candidate for the Democratic nomination for State House District 32

### Time to replace Sunset board

On Tuesday, I attended the February board meeting of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District. During the public comment portion of the meeting, several pool patrons voiced a variety of complaints they have regarding Sunset Pool, and the deterioration of its operations over the last few years.

One patron who spoke referred to the changes made in the men’s locker room as being more appropriate for a “gay men’s bathhouse.” At the end of the public comment segment, one of the board members said that he had a problem with the reference to a “gay men’s bathhouse” and the rest of the board agreed. Really? That was the only thing they took away?

I find it disconcerting that not one of the board’s members responded to any of the concerns that were mentioned by the others who spoke at that meeting. To say that the board is ineffective is an understatement. For starters, not even one of its members uses the pool on a regular basis. Perhaps it’s time we looked into how to go about replacing the board.

**Marti Waje**  
Seaside

## MEETINGS

**TUESDAY, March 6**  
**Community Center Commission,** 10:30 a.m., 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.  
**Seaside Library Board,** 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway, Seaside.  
**Seaside Planning Commission,** 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**WEDNESDAY, March 7**  
**Seaside Improvement Commission,** 6

p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.  
**Gearhart City Council,** 7 p.m., 698 Pacific Way, Gearhart.  
**THURSDAY, March 8**  
**Seaside Convention Center Commission,** 5 p.m., 415 First Avenue.  
**Cannon Beach Academy,** 5:30 p.m. 3718 S. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach.  
**Gearhart Planning Commission,** 6 p.m.,

698 Pacific Way, Gearhart.  
**MONDAY, March 12**  
**Seaside City Council,** 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.  
**THURSDAY, March 15**  
**Seaside Tree Board,** 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.  
**Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission,** 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.