

THE CONSERVATION VOTER

2006 Off-Year Elections Critical for Oregon's Environment

by Kevin Finney, OLCV Political Director

Election Year 2006 may not include a presidential contest – but don't think for a minute that this election is unimportant for the environment. Not only will Oregon voters go to the polls in the May Primary and the November General Election to select a Governor and members of Congress, we will also determine the shape of the Oregon Legislature, and many County Commissions and City Councils, for the next two years at least.

Governor's Race Takes Shape

The Governor's race is shaping up as a 6-way race. John Kitzhaber and Vicki Walker have bowed out, leaving Democratic incumbent Ted Kulongoski to be challenged by Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson and former State Treasurer Jim Hill for the Democratic nomination.

Although Kulongoski gets mixed reviews from environmental leaders, his campaign is highlighting his support for stronger tailpipe emission standards for new cars, his leadership on setting up Marine Reserves, his goal of cleaning up the Willamette, and his efforts to defend the 2001 Roadless Rule, as examples of his environmental commitment. Commissioner Sorenson received a 100% rating on OLCV's Lane County Commission Scorecards for 2002-2003 and 2004-2005. Jim Hill's average OLCV rating from his time in the Legislature is 87%.

Conversely, none of the Republican candidates – Kevin Mannix, Ron Saxton, and Jason Atkinson – appear to have sufficient environmental credentials to merit the support of environmental voters. None of them chose to participate in the OLCV endorsement process.

One wild card in the Governor's race is Senator Ben Westlund (R-Bend), who is considering running for Governor as an independent. His 2005 OLCV score of 42% was the highest of any Republican in the legislature, and huge improvement over the 0% he scored in 2003.

Cleaning House a Top Environmental Priority

When environmental political directors go to sleep


at night, they dream of defeating House Speaker Karen Minnis (R-Troutdale), who's averaged 10% on OLCV's scorecard over the past 3 sessions, and a handful of other House members who have turned that chamber of the Legislature into a graveyard for badly needed environmental legislation. OLCV has given our early endorsement to Rob Brading, Minnis' challenger.


Of course, defeating Minnis won't by itself be enough. OLCV is currently evaluating several other races where our help is most likely to oust an anti-environment incumbent, or to shift an open seat to become pro-environment. We're particularly eyeing seats in Hillsboro, Salem, Eugene, and Newport as offering the best opportunities to do this, but need to complete our endorsement process before reaching any conclusions.

We must also defend some legislators who showed true leadership on behalf of clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment. For example, first term Representative Larry Galizio (D-Tigard) (88% 2005 OLCV score) is expected to have a tough reelection. After providing more than \$20,000 in campaign assistance to Galizio in his narrow 2004 victory, we don't want to see him booted out before he has a chance to shine as a pro-environment leader.

High Stakes in the State Senate

While all 60 House seats are up for election this year, only 15 of the 30 Senate seats are up. State Senator Charlie Ringo surprised many when (*cont. next page*)

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(cont. from page 1) he announced in late January that he would not seek re-election in Senate District 17 (Beaverton and NW Portland). Representative Brad Avakian, who has a lifetime OLCV score of 92%, is running to fill Ringo’s seat, and is widely considered the likely successor.

Another race we’re watching involves Senator Rick Metsger (R-Welches), who has an 81% lifetime OLCV score. He may receive a strong challenge from Hood River County Commissioner Carol York. Metsger will have to work to retain this seat.

OLCV is also closely watching Senate District 7, which includes portions of Eugene along with Coburg and Junction City. Democrat Vicki Walker (average score of 91% over the last three legislative sessions) is now running for reelection for this seat against former Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey. Torrey, while widely perceived as a moderate, had a dismal environmental record as mayor.

The Local Scene

OLCV’s County Chapters will also be building support for many pro-environment candidates at the local level – in races for City Councils, County Commissions, and the Metro Council, from Medford to Portland, Bend to Newport, and Gresham to Eugene. OLCV will be raising funds, recruiting volunteers, and turning out the environmental vote for candidates who will fight for a clean and safe environment.

2006 promises to be a busy year – but you can count on OLCV to build support for environmental candidates throughout Oregon, with your help. Thank you!



OLCV Releases LOCAL Environmental Scorecards

Did your local elected officials vote for more sprawl and pollution? In an attempt to separate the true stewards of our environment from those who just talk that way, several OLCV county chapters have released Environmental Scorecards for local bodies of government in their counties.

While OLCV has produced the Legislative Environmental Scorecard for over 30 years, tracking the voting records of local officials is relatively new for us. Our chapters worked with neighborhood associations, community members, and local conservation groups to compile votes where elected officials had a clear opportunity to protect the environment. Compiling our Portland-area Metro Council scorecard required a collaboration of all three Metro-area OLCV chapters. Average scores for some local officials are below:

What Average Score Did Your Local Officials Earn?	
Eugene City Council (2004-2005)	62%
Lane County Board of Commissioners (2004-2005)	43%
Portland regional Metro Council (2005)	66%
Salem City Council (2005)	20%
Washington County Board of Commissioners (2004-2005)	58%

To view the entire scorecards, including scores for individual elected officials and explanations of votes, visit www.olcv.org/2006localscorecards, or call Jennifer at 503-224-4011 to have a copy mailed to you. Be on the lookout for future local Environmental Scorecards, to be released in summer 2006.



From OLCV Executive Director Jonathan Poisner

As I embark on my tenth year with OLCV, I am struck by how much things can simultaneously stay the same and yet be very different.

The challenges we face today are identical to the challenges the Oregon League of Conservation Voters faced in 1998. Then and now, Oregon's House is governed by a majority hostile to environmental protection, yet willing to go to great lengths to mask that hostility.

Politicians beholden to developers and large corporate polluters continue to "greenscam," using doublespeak to mask their policies. George W. Bush earned the Gold Medal in doublespeak with his mis-named "Clear Skies" proposal that actually weakens clean air safeguards.

But Bush has many comrades at the local level. Last session, Oregon's House Leadership killed the bio-diesel bill pushed by environmental groups and farmers. Why? Because it failed to include large new tax breaks to polluters. Yet, Speaker of the House Karen Minnis wrote a misleading opinion piece for *The Oregonian* claiming falsely that House leaders loved the bio-fuels bill and Senate leaders killed it.

OLCV's currency in fighting back against this doublespeak is the truth. Whether elected officials make it easy - as Newt Gingrich did in the 1990s with his open warfare on the environment - or harder, through the greenscamming of George Bush and Karen Minnis, OLCV's job remains the same.

What's changed most over the last decade are the means we use to accomplish this goal. In 1998, our PAC had a \$70,000 budget and our two county chapters mobilized 350 volunteers to talk directly to voters, almost all on the phone. We were minor players in a few legislative races, plus a half-dozen local government races.

By 2004, our PAC's budget exceeded \$300,000 and our eight county chapters involved over 1,200 volunteers in talking to tens of thousands of voters at the door and on the phone. We played major

roles in eight legislative races and twenty local races, winning 18 of 28 races.

We saw a big improvement in the Oregon Legislature in 2005, in particular because our efforts in the Senate helped swing the balance of power to put pro-environment leaders in charge of Senate Committees.

Of course, the Legislature still failed overall, so we have more work to do in 2006. As we gear up for 2006, our major priorities are:

- ➔ Expanding our work going door-to-door on behalf of pro-conservation leaders
- ➔ Introducing new internet tools that make it easier for volunteers to get involved
- ➔ Making sure our Legislative and Local Scorecards are viewed by a record number of Oregonians looking to evaluate their leaders

How will we do this? With your help!

We will elect more pro-conservation leaders in more tough races because members like you care enough to donate both membership dollars to OLCV and special gifts to our Political Action Committee.

And more of you will invest your precious volunteer time fighting to preserve what's precious about Oregon - our clean air and water, our farm and forestland, and our wildlife.

Why must we do this? Because we recognize that we can't wait for some great leader to come in and save us. It's WE the people. We have the power to elect leaders who'll put our children's future first. We can change the Oregon Legislature. We can get Oregon back on track.

We can build a groundswell of support so strong that we catapult leaders into office for whom the environment is a bedrock value, while providing the momentum needed to turn our fair-weather friends into champions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Jonathan".

Jonathan Poisner
Executive Director

Why become a monthly donor? Ask OLCV member Tom Feely!

Tom Feely has been a monthly donor to OLCV since 1999.

"Protecting Oregon's environment is important to me," Tom says. "I'm an Oregon native and love to spend time outdoors with my teenage kids. We have a cabin in the Mount Hood National Forest and don't want to see any further degradation of Oregon's environment."

Tom's regular contributions help ensure that special places like Mt. Hood will be protected for his kids (and theirs) to enjoy.

"I feel that being a monthly donor is the best way to ensure steady and consistent funding for OLCV, to help them respond quickly to issues, and to budget for their future," Tom says.

Remember, it's not the size of your gift that matters as much as the fact that it comes regularly. If 60 people gave just \$10 a month to OLCV, that would provide us with \$600 a month in income, or \$7,200 a year. For that amount we could print and distribute 10,000 copies of our Legislative Scorecard, or provide staff support to one of our county chapters for 11 months.

Your regular gift, like Tom's, truly can help make a difference. Please consider becoming a monthly donor, too – just fill out the form below, and send it in!



"Less protection for Mt. Hood? Oh no!" Tom's kids goofing around at their cabin, c.1992.

Join Tom (see above) and become a monthly donor!

Yes! Sign me up as a Sustaining Member!

I would like to contribute this often:

- Monthly Quarterly

I would like to contribute this amount:

- \$100 \$50 \$25
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