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Beyer seeks former legislative position

Published: October 20, 2010

By Helen Hollyer

Incumbent State Senator Bill Morrisette's decision not to run for re-election opened the Senate seat for District 6 up to three distinctly different candidates – Democrat Lee Beyer, Republican Michael Spasaro and Independent Scott Reynolds.

Neither Spasaro nor Reynolds has asked to be interviewed by The Creswell Chronicle; however, Beyer visited the newspaper recently to talk about his views on issues that will confront state legislators when the legislature convenes next year.

Asked to describe District 6, Beyer said that the diverse district encompasses central Lane and Linn Counties, including Springfield and three precincts in South Eugene before extending south to Creswell, southeast to Pleasant Hill, east up the McKenzie River and northeast into Mohawk Valley.

"I was elected to the [state] senate previously in this district, which was [then] configured differently," he said, pointing out that he has experience in both the legislative and executive sides serving in a variety of both appointed and elected positions.

His resume indicates considerable experience in assisting small businesses in removing barriers to expansion and helping new industries locate in Lane County.

He has worked as a management analyst with the Oregon Executive Department, served on the Eugene Business Assistance Team and was Executive Director for the Metro Partnership.

After being appointed to and serving on the Springfield City Planning Commission, he was elected as a Springfield City Councillor.

He was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives, where, during his second term he was chosen as Democratic Whip. While in the House he served as vice-chair of the Business and Labor Committee and Revenue Committee and as a member of the Rules Committee.

He was elected to the State Senate in 1998, where he served as vice-chair of the Revenue and School Finance Committee and the Business & Consumer Affairs Committee and as a member of the Rules & Elections Committee.

In 2001, Governor Kitzhaber asked him to join the Oregon Public Utilities Commission, a consumer protection regulatory agency that oversees private electric, telecommunications, natural gas



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Lee Beyer

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and water utilities. Two years later, Governor Kulongski appointed him Chairman of the OPUC.

"The legislature is too partisan," Beyer said. "I'm proud of my previous ability to bridge the partisan divide... [I'm] pragmatic.

"Oregon is at a turning point, we have to get the economy going again," he said. "How quickly we can come out of recession depends on positioning ourselves for when the national economy recovers."

"[That includes] having properly zoned land for development without endangering the environment and having permitting and financing programs [in place]. I've have done that and understand that.

"We have to restructure state government," he continued. "We can't continue to do business like we do. We can pick up three to five percent savings in administration/management.

"We need to make decisions about human services, health and how to fund schools adequately," he said, suggesting creation of a revenue bond to create sustaining funds for the University of Oregon, which he believes could operate separately off such a revenue stream.

"My top priority is education," Beyer said. "We must provide Oregon's youth with the knowledge and skills to be successful, realizing that our state economy is dependent on this emerging workforce.

"Adversity does provide some opportunities," he commented. "We don't have a choice... we're going to have to change some things."

Beyer indicated that his first priority as state senator would be to focus on bringing jobs back to Oregon because "without profitable businesses and their workers making an income, there won't be the tax revenue necessary to support children's education and other vital services."

He emphasized that increasing revenue alone won't solve all the state's problems, which has an unsustainable budget.

"We can't tax our way out of fiscal problems and we can't keep doing everything the same way. We can and must get more efficient and more accountable."