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Top Priorities

What are your three top priorities if elected to the Board of County Commissioners?

I'm running to help build a strong, vibrant Central Oregon where small businesses grow and communities thrive. As an Indigenous person and member of The Klamath Tribes, I was taught the importance of protecting the land and taking care of people. This is how I center my decision and priority-making processes. When we invest in people, place, and local businesses together, we build an economy that works for everyone. I will prioritize:

Making Deschutes Affordable for People who Live and Work Here: A strong small business economy depends on whether workers can afford to live in the community they serve. I'm committed to increasing the supply of diverse, attainable housing so entrepreneurs and employees can put down and maintain roots in Central Oregon. I will attack other issues affecting affordability for working families like childcare, transportation, and elder care.

Environmental Protection & Long-Term Sustainability: Our natural environment is a core economic driver, drawing people into Central Oregon and it must be protected at all

costs. Development and growth should only happen when it doesn't interfere with our water, wildfire risk, and responsible growth. It is imperative that we support local businesses and attract outside investors that are committed to industry that is protective of our natural resources, not exploitative.

Strong Communities & Fair Local Economy: Small businesses thrive in communities where the rules are fair, transparent, and locally driven. I'm committed to creating a stable economic environment where workers feel safe, businesses can rely on a consistent workforce, and customers feel confident participating in the local economy. That includes ensuring that local policies protect community members from disruptive federal actions that create fear, destabilize the workforce, and hurt small businesses.

Business Competitiveness & Regulatory Predictability

County governments play a key role in land use planning, permitting, and regional economic development. What role should Deschutes County government play in supporting economic development and maintaining Central Oregon's competitiveness as a place for businesses to invest and create jobs?

Deschutes County should play a proactive role in creating a stable, predictable environment where businesses can invest with confidence while protecting the natural assets that drive our economy: streamlining permitting, improving coordination across agencies, and ensuring land use decisions are clear, timely, and consistent so small businesses and developers can plan and grow without unnecessary delays. There are several municipalities who have been very successful in this and serve as solid examples.

Expanding zoning flexibility, as Richmond, VA has done with mixed-use and home-based business-friendly policies, would create more spaces where entrepreneurs can legally operate. Similarly, implementing low-cost, temporary retail or pop-up spaces like Muskegon, MI's micro-retail chalets would allow new businesses to test concepts and grow without the risk of high overhead, while hands-on support with licensing, grants, and mentorship increases the likelihood that these businesses survive and graduate to permanent locations. Additionally, Richmond has created an Office of Minority Owned Businesses that has been successful in helping people who have previously had access to mentors and information that help in starting and running small businesses. This method could be used to help new small business owners navigate the licensing, permitting, and development processes that often keep potential entrepreneurs from starting and growing small businesses. These approaches not only help startups but also activate underutilized commercial areas and build vibrant local economies.

Long-term competitiveness depends on addressing the fundamentals: attainable workforce housing, reliable infrastructure, and responsible management of water and wildfire risk. Katy, TX's success demonstrates the importance of aligning workforce development with local business needs—partnerships between schools, colleges, and employers create a talent pipeline that supports scaling companies. Maintaining affordability and quality of life ensures businesses can attract and retain employees, keeping the region desirable for both work and visitation. Without these fundamentals, even well-intentioned business support programs are limited in impact.

Finally, economic development efforts should focus on strengthening local and small businesses, not just attracting outside investment. By pairing targeted support with fair, transparent decision-making and public-private partnerships, Deschutes County can help microbusinesses graduate to larger-scale operations. Combining

policy reforms, low-barrier entry points, and population- and workforce-driven growth strategy would create a comprehensive ecosystem in which entrepreneurship flourishes, small businesses scale, and the broader community shares in a resilient, locally rooted economy.

Workforce Availability

Employers across Central Oregon report difficulty recruiting and retaining workers due to housing affordability, childcare access, and other cost-of-living pressures.

What actions should Deschutes County take to help increase the supply of workforce housing as well as access to childcare in the region?

Deschutes County should take a more active role in increasing the supply of workforce housing by reducing barriers to development and aligning land use with community needs. That includes streamlining permitting for workforce and middle-income housing, expanding opportunities for higher-density and missing-middle housing, and partnering with cities and the private sector to bring more shovel-ready land online. The County can also use tools like incentives, public-private partnerships, and infrastructure investments to make it financially feasible to build the kinds of housing our workforce can actually afford.

Childcare is just as critical to a functioning workforce. The County should support expanding childcare capacity by reducing zoning and regulatory barriers for providers, investing in facility development, and partnering with employers and community organizations to co-locate or expand childcare options. Addressing housing and childcare together is essential because businesses can't grow if workers can't afford to live here or access the care they need to stay in the workforce. Additionally, I have proposed an affordability fund that could supplement childcare costs for working families. It would be funded through fees placed on short-term rentals and second homes that stay vacant.

Infrastructure That Enables Regional Growth

Rapid population growth in Central Oregon is increasing demand for infrastructure to support housing, job creation, and economic activity. What transportation investments or state highway priorities should Deschutes County advance, particularly related to Highway 97, to improve safety, reduce congestion, and support regional mobility?

The County should prioritize transportation investments that improve safety, reliability, and regional connectivity in Central Oregon. This includes advancing targeted safety upgrades like additional passing lanes, intersection improvements, and separated interchanges in high-risk areas to reduce serious crashes while keeping freight and commuter traffic moving efficiently.

At the same time, we need to reduce congestion by investing in a more complete transportation system. That means coordinating with the state to improve north-south flow on 97, while also supporting parallel routes, local road connectivity, and transit options that take pressure off the highway. In Deschutes County about 70-80% of workers drive alone to work. By investing in reliable and readily available public transportation between where people live and work has the potential to significantly decrease the amount of traffic on Highway 97. Strategic investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure also improve short-distance mobility and reduce vehicle demand, particularly within and between growing communities.

Finally, long-term competitiveness requires planning ahead of growth. The County should work closely with regional partners to align transportation, land use, and economic development so infrastructure keeps pace with housing and job creation, ensuring Central Oregon remains a safe, efficient, and attractive place to live, work, and do business.

Education & Workforce Readiness

Strengthening the regional workforce pipeline requires collaboration between employers, education providers, and public agencies. How should Deschutes County support partnerships with schools, colleges, and workforce training programs to strengthen the regional talent pipeline?

Deschutes County should act as a convener between employers, schools, colleges, and workforce training programs to ensure our regional talent pipeline meets the needs of a growing economy. This includes supporting apprenticeships, internships, and training programs that prepare people for good, well-paid jobs in trades, healthcare, technology, and small business. By aligning education with employer demand and removing barriers to participation, the County can help workers build careers that sustain families while giving local businesses the skilled workforce they need to thrive.

Balanced Environmental Stewardship & Economic Vitality

Deschutes County must balance competing priorities including housing availability, protection of agricultural lands, water use, rural open space, wildfire preparedness, and habitat preservation. How would you approach these tradeoffs, and what principles would guide your decisions when conflicts arise between increasing housing supply and preserving resource lands?

I approach these tradeoffs with a values-driven framework that puts people and place first. Housing is critical for workforce stability and economic growth, but it cannot come at the expense of our natural resources, agricultural lands, or wildfire

resilience. I would prioritize smart growth strategies that focus development in already-served areas, promote higher-density and workforce housing where appropriate, and preserve critical farmland, open space, and sensitive habitats. Luckily, this approach is also more affordable. When you develop through infill, where infrastructure already exists, you reduce fiscal impact, but also reduce strain on transportation corridors and the environment.

Decisions would be guided by long-term sustainability: evaluating the cumulative impact on water, wildfire risk, and ecological health, while ensuring the community can afford to live and work here. I believe transparent, data-driven processes, community engagement, and partnerships with developers and conservation organizations can help find solutions that expand housing without sacrificing the environmental and agricultural assets that make Central Oregon unique.

Regional Representation

If elected, how would you work with cities, regional organizations, and the state to advance Central Oregon's economic and infrastructure priorities? How will you ensure local employers and business organizations remain engaged in county decision-making?

My experience as a single working mother gives me firsthand insight into housing, childcare, and transportation challenges that affect workforce stability. As a tribal member, I understand the importance of protecting natural resources and balancing growth with cultural and environmental stewardship. Serving on the school board taught me how to build consensus across diverse stakeholders, and as a flight paramedic, I've seen how critical infrastructure and emergency planning are to community safety.

I would apply these lessons by collaborating with cities, regional organizations, and

the state to advance housing, transportation, and workforce development policies that are practical, equitable, and resilient. To keep employers engaged, I would establish structured forums and advisory councils, ensuring local business input shapes decisions that support growth while protecting the people and places that make Central Oregon thrive.