

Andrew Caruana

House District 54 Candidate

caruanaforbend.org

Top Priorities

What are your three top legislative priorities if elected to represent House District 54?

My top three legislative priorities, if elected to House District 54, briefly stated, are to fight to ensure that all Oregonians have access to comprehensive, affordable healthcare, prioritize environmentally conscious policies and initiatives, and push for more affordable housing in Bend and across the state.

Business Competitiveness & Regulatory Predictability

Central Oregon employers consistently identify regulatory complexity, permitting delays, and policy uncertainty as barriers to investment and job creation.

What policies would you prioritize: 1) to ensure Oregon, as well as regions like Central Oregon, remain competitive for business investment and job growth; and 2) to support entrepreneurs and small business growth?

I would prioritize policies that support existing programs or create new ones that provide tax breaks for small businesses and smaller startups. I would also like to explore increased tax credits or grants for small employers to access that would be specifically targeted towards wages -- so that small businesses with tighter margins can afford to pay employees a living wage. Bend also has a lot of work to do to alleviate property tax burdens and local regulatory hurdles so businesses can set up

shop. I also want to support legislation that makes it easier for small businesses and entrepreneurs to compete more effectively with big chains for land, rental space, and talent. I want to make it much easier for local small businesses to operate in Bend, and I'm very willing to explore out-of-the-box solutions.

Workforce Availability

Employers across Central Oregon report difficulty recruiting and retaining workers due to limited access to childcare, rising healthcare costs, and a growing need for eldercare services. What legislative solutions would you support to: (1) expand access to childcare; (2) improve access to affordable healthcare; and (3) address the growing need for eldercare services in regions like Central Oregon?

1) I see childcare access as a structural issue (not enough facilities) and a financial issue (childcare being cost-prohibitive). I would support Oregon expanding the state-level child tax credit(s). I also want to work to make childcare more affordable via a childcare tax credit or through expanded grants for facilities who provide childcare to income qualifying individuals.

2) I strongly support Healthcare for All Oregon and will wholeheartedly pursue legislation that gets us to a point of having universal healthcare for all of Oregon. Beyond that, in the short term, I want to fight to ensure that Medicaid/Medicare dollars continue flowing into the state to maintain services.

3) As with childcare, eldercare is a structural and financial issue. If elected, to the extent I am able, I will fight to maintain Medicare funding for the state and specifically work to ensure that medications and behavioral healthcare remain affordable. This is a multifaceted issue, though, I want to fight for accessible and robust public transportation and affordable housing (among other structural needs) to ensure that Bend is a community that supports our aging population.

Infrastructure That Enables Regional Growth

Rapid population growth in Central Oregon is increasing demand for transportation, utilities, and housing needed to support economic development.

What policies or investments would you support to accelerate infrastructure development, increase workforce housing availability, and guide the next statewide transportation funding strategy to support growing regions like Central Oregon?

First and foremost, I am strongly opposed to the ODOT funding passage passed in the Fall special session. That package plugs funding gaps by gouging low and middle-income people and families at the pump and with recurrent registration and title fees.

If elected, I would be an active participant in the likely renegotiation of that package to ensure an actual balance among needed services, government belt tightening, and, as a last resort, tax increases. I would support amending the Oregon Constitution to axe the gas tax and transition to a weight-based road-use fee for private vehicles. I would also support further changes to the transient lodging tax to allow local municipalities greater flexibility in using that money for infrastructure, and I would potentially be open to increasing that tax if it would alleviate infrastructure burdens.

Bend has to move away from a band-aid approach — adding bike lanes and roundabouts on a patchwork basis — and fix Bend's underlying transportation structural deficits.

As stated, I will strongly support efforts to increase workforce housing and expand clean energy initiatives. Lastly, energy demand needs to be borne by its biggest consumers. If elected, I will champion legislation to prohibit data centers and AI

companies from passing infrastructure upgrades on to consumers and local businesses.

Education & Workforce Readiness

Employers increasingly rely on partnerships with education institutions and workforce training programs to meet evolving workforce needs.

How should Oregon strengthen career and technical education, apprenticeships, and industry partnerships to prepare students for in-demand careers?

I think this issue starts at the K-12 level. There needs to be a conscious effort to destigmatize career technical education and trade work. So much emphasis is placed on a four-year degree, which is incredible for some, but not all. I think that as more people pursue trades, technical schools, and specific degree tracks, Oregon needs to do more to stimulate direct pathways from school/training to real jobs. I would support tax credits for companies that hire recent graduates into career positions (living-wage and/or advancement tracks) as a percentage of their hiring. I would also love to see companies partnering with institutions to create more internship opportunities as part of degree requirements, so that our recent graduates come into the workforce with 6 months to a year of relevant experience in their chosen fields.

Balanced Environmental Stewardship & Economic Vitality

Central Oregon's natural environment is a key economic asset, while businesses also depend on reliable energy, water, and infrastructure systems.

What policies would you support to ensure reliable and affordable energy and utility infrastructure for Oregon households and businesses?

As an immediate priority, I would support legislation to axe tax-breaks for data-centers and legislate that data centers are fully responsible to compensate communities for their environmental impacts and the resource draw. I would also support legislation to prohibit rate increases related to AI and data-center draw. I would also support expanded clean energy tax credits.

Regional Representation

If elected, how would you work with regional partners, including local governments, business organizations, and the Central Oregon Legislative Caucus, to advance Central Oregon's priorities in Salem?

My main reason for running is that I want to be an accessible legislator, meaning accessible to fellow legislators and the Central Oregon caucus, accessible to Bend's Mayor and City Council, accessible to our County Commission, accessible to all of the different state and municipal agencies and regulatory bodies, and accessible especially to District 54's local businesses and constituents.

To be blunt, a significant motivator for why I decided to run for the legislature was because I feel that Representative Kropf has not been responsive to the needs of the business community, emblematic of his priority legislation during the 2026 session, HB4146, which would have, if passed, had an outsized negative impact on Bend's local breweries, distributors, and restaurant industries. He has also failed to be responsive to the needs of the city and county by failing to build and maintain relationships with local elected officials.

If elected, my promise is to build, maintain, and strengthen relationships in the Bend

community. My role is to represent you and your interests, not to seek re-election, a higher office, or my own legislative interests at the expense of the community I serve. I want my legislative priorities to be in step with the needs of constituents, local businesses, the city, and the county.

As an experienced policy advocate, I know how to build bipartisan relationships and seek compromise solutions to get things done, and I fully intend to be a collaborator as a legislator. I want to partner on legislation where it makes sense, and I want to invite as much constituency participation into my legislative process as possible.