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Candidate for House District 53

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Business Competitiveness & Regulatory Predictability

Oregon businesses are navigating rising costs, regulatory complexity, and increasing competition for investment and job creation. Recent indicators point to a decline in the state's competitiveness. According to Oregon Business & Industry's Oregon Scorecard, Oregon ranks 47th for business friendliness and 43rd for cost of doing business. OBI also reports that Oregon ranked 39th in CNBC's 2025 America's Top States for Business rankings—down 11 places in a single year and from 17th overall as recently as 2017.

What policies would you pursue to improve Oregon's business climate and competitiveness? How would you approach taxes, fees, regulations, and permitting requirements that affect the cost of doing business?

It's incredibly important that businesses know and feel that Oregon is open for business. It's incumbent upon the state to create an environment that is conducive to business growth, investment, and development. We have missed the mark on this front over the last several years, and we need to change course.

The Governor put together the Prosperity Council, and there were a number of recommendations that came out of that work. I, along with others, am working to turn those recommendations into meaningful policy.

As a member of the Climate, Energy and Environment Committee, and as Chair of the Natural Resources Committee and the Natural Resources Emergency Board Subcommittee, I've been focused on improving permitting in the natural resources space, particularly at DEQ.

We worked to pass legislation that allows DEQ to invoke receipt authority to help speed up the Title V permitting process. In the upcoming session, we're looking at additional permitting and rulemaking reforms. One proposal under consideration is modeled on reforms in other states: for every new regulation or rule adopted, two existing rules would have to be identified for elimination. The goal is to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining the environmental protections Oregonians expect.

I'm also at the negotiating table on Cap and Invest, another issue identified by the Prosperity Council. The Climate Protection Program, which was instituted through an executive order under Governor Brown, could increase gas prices by as much as \$1.10 per gallon, depending on the carbon price and how the program ultimately rolls out. Cap and Invest, by comparison, would have a significantly lower impact on fuel prices, while directing the revenue toward transportation projects. That is an important distinction for Oregon families and businesses.

Finally, I'm working on reforms to Paid Leave Oregon to ensure that the program works for both employees and employers while remaining financially sustainable over the long term.

These efforts are all part of the same objective: making Oregon a place where businesses can grow, people can find good jobs, and employers have the confidence to invest and build here. We can protect our natural resources, support Oregon workers, and still create a regulatory and economic environment that says clearly: Oregon is open for business.

Workforce Availability: Housing, Healthcare & Childcare

Central Oregon employers continue to report challenges recruiting and retaining workers due to housing affordability, healthcare costs and access, childcare availability, and other cost-of-living pressures.

What state policies would you prioritize to address these barriers and improve employers' ability to attract and retain workers in Central Oregon? Please list specific policy examples.

Central Oregon employers are facing real challenges recruiting and retaining workers, and those challenges are directly connected to the cost of living, especially housing, healthcare, and childcare.

Oregon has taken steps to address each of these issues, but I believe we need to focus more heavily on whether those policies are actually producing results for working families and employers.

On housing, Oregon has taken significant steps through the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis and Housing Production Strategies to increase housing production and hold communities accountable for meeting identified housing needs. We have also made strides in making UGB expansion less onerous, but we know there will need to

be additional reforms to this process. Only three cities were able to take advantage of the original reforms established through HB 1537.

In Bend, these reforms have already resulted in several developments that will bring both workforce and market-rate housing online. Additionally, through the LIFT Program, we have funded affordable housing projects in Bend, Sisters, and Redmond, bringing hundreds of affordable units online.

Our focus should be on the economics of housing supply. We have seen in communities like Dallas that increasing housing supply can help reduce housing costs. However, we need to build the right types of housing in the right places so that supply actually reflects the needs of the market and matches demand.

These are important reforms, but we need to make sure we are actually getting more housing built. In Central Oregon, that means continuing to address permitting, regulatory barriers, infrastructure capacity, and the overall cost of development. We should be looking for ways to build more housing, more quickly, and at price points that working families can afford.

On childcare, Oregon has expanded assistance through the Employment Related Day Care program and increased reimbursement rates. But affordability is only part of the problem. In Central Oregon, we also need to increase the actual supply of childcare. I would prioritize policies that make it easier to open and expand childcare facilities, recruit and retain childcare workers, and encourage employers and communities to partner in providing childcare.

Healthcare is another major concern. Oregon has expanded coverage, but having insurance does not necessarily mean having affordable or timely access to care. As we look at potential cuts to the Oregon Health Plan, we need to recognize the significant impact those changes could have in Central Oregon. Nearly 50 percent of children in this district rely on OHP.

We need to make sure we can keep children insured while also ensuring that primary care providers have a sustainable reimbursement model. One option worth examining is moving toward a fee-for-service model for Cover Oregon. The goal should be to maintain coverage for families while ensuring that providers have the resources necessary to continue serving our communities.

Ultimately, addressing these workforce challenges requires us to focus on affordability, access, and supply. If we want employers to attract and retain workers

in Central Oregon, we need to make it possible for people to afford a home, find reliable childcare, and access quality healthcare. That means evaluating the policies we already have, building on what is working, and being willing to reform what isn't.

Infrastructure That Enables Regional Growth

Central Oregon's population and economy continue to grow, increasing demand for transportation, utilities, and other infrastructure needed to support housing and employment.

What transportation and infrastructure investments should the state prioritize for Central Oregon, and how would you approach funding those investments while considering impacts on businesses and residents?

Transportation is one of the most challenging issues facing Oregon and communities across the country. Oregon has a significant deferred-maintenance backlog that must be addressed, but we also have to recognize that the gas tax is not a sustainable long-term funding source and will generate diminishing returns as vehicles become more fuel efficient and the transportation system evolves.

At the same time, we need to take a hard look at the recent failure to increase the gas tax on the May 2026 ballot. That outcome demonstrated that we need to restore public trust and confidence that the Oregon Department of Transportation is spending taxpayer dollars wisely and prioritizing the services Oregonians depend on most.

I hope the new ODOT director will bring stability to the agency and work toward a truly balanced, sustainable budget. While ODOT's current budget may appear balanced on paper, we need to recognize that this has been accomplished in part through a significant reduction in the agency's workforce and by moving resources around to keep maintenance budgets afloat. That is not a sustainable long-term strategy.

My immediate focus will be keeping the maintenance station in Sisters open. That station plays a critical role in keeping the pass open and safe, particularly during winter weather, and ODOT crews are also essential to wildfire evacuation efforts. For Central Oregon businesses, keeping the pass open and safe is not optional—it is critical to our ability to move people, goods, and services throughout the region.

We also need to continue investing in Highway 97. Specifically, I want to see improvements that address flooding and the installation of appropriate centerline barriers and dividers where they are needed to improve safety. Highway 97 is a critical north-south transportation corridor for Central Oregon, and maintaining its safety and reliability is essential to our communities and our economy.

Ultimately, we need a transportation system that is financially sustainable, maintained properly, and focused on the infrastructure that Oregonians rely on every day. That starts with restoring trust in ODOT, protecting core maintenance services, and making smart investments in the roads and infrastructure that keep Central Oregon connected.

Education & Workforce Readiness

Employers need workers with the skills and training required for both existing jobs and an evolving economy. Central Oregon has particular workforce needs in sectors including healthcare and construction.

What changes or investments would you support to better align Oregon's education and workforce development systems with employer needs, including career and technical education, apprenticeships, workforce training, and professional licensing?

Education reform will be a primary focus of the 2027 Legislative Session, with much of that work being led by Rep. April Dobson, Vice Chair of the House Education Committee.

Our first priority should be making sure Oregon students are spending more time in the classroom. Oregon students currently attend school for less time than our neighbors in Washington, whose students receive roughly an additional week of instruction each year. We need to close that gap and make sure Oregon students have the instructional time they need to succeed. We need to set a goal for 180 days; right now, Bend La-Pine students are in school 169 days. The biggest expenses in ramping up school days are transportation and food, and we will need to increase days in a scalable way overtime, as we do not have the budget to immediately jump to 180 days.

Second, we need to take a thoughtful approach to technology in the classroom and make sure the technology students are using is age appropriate. One of the first

steps we took was removing cell phones from classrooms, giving students the opportunity to learn without constant distraction and allowing teachers to focus on teaching rather than competing for their students' attention. This has been a very successful policy.

A personal policy priority of mine will be addressing age verification on social media platforms. We are seeing troubling increases in eating disorders among young people, and much of the content influencing these behaviors is being amplified through online platforms. Research increasingly shows that social media can affect patterns of behavior and comparison during critical periods of brain development. The design of these platforms can also encourage compulsive use by creating repeated reward and dopamine pathways.

The impact on our youth is significant, particularly for girls and especially for girls from low-income households. We have an obligation to protect children from what has been called the "attachment economy" so that they have the freedom to define their own childhood rather than having it shaped by algorithms designed to capture and hold their attention.

I am proud to be part of the national coalition through Project Liberty and the Knight-Georgetown Institute working to address youth online safety through state policy. We need to make sure that technology serves our children rather than exploiting their vulnerabilities, and that parents and families have the tools they need to keep young people safe online.

Balanced Environmental Stewardship & Economic Vitality

Central Oregon faces important decisions involving water, energy, wildfire resilience, natural resources, housing, and economic growth.

How would you approach state environmental and natural resources policies when conservation goals, infrastructure needs, and economic impacts are in tension?
What principles would guide your decisions?

As Chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Ways and Means and Chair of the Natural Resources Emergency Board, I know we have significant budget challenges ahead of us. At the same time, the tension between environmental interests and businesses has existed in Oregon for decades. Too often, we have struggled to find the through line that allows us to balance these competing

interests while protecting our natural resources and supporting the communities and industries that depend on them.

One area where I believe we have an opportunity to demonstrate what collaboration can accomplish is the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

In January, the HCP was submitted to the federal government, and we approved a consultant to help move the process forward at the federal level. There is a real urgency here. If the program is not approved within two years, we risk losing nearly a decade of work and investment.

This project is an example of environmental cooperativism at its best. Loggers, conservationists, landowners, and other stakeholders have come together around a shared goal and are advocating for the same outcome. That kind of collaboration is exactly what Oregon should be encouraging.

However, the approximately \$10 million needed to continue the research and work necessary to complete the HCP was not included in the Governor's budget at a time when we are facing significant budget constraints. I will be advocating to preserve this funding.

Completing the HCP would allow Oregon to obtain an incidental take permit and move into the next phase of managing our natural resources—one where environmental protection and economic activity can exist side by side. Rather than continuing to treat these interests.