

# Endorsements: Yakima Herald-Republic recommendations for the Nov. 8 general election

Yakima Herald-Republic Editorial Board

Updated Nov 1, 2016

In the run-up to the Nov. 8 general election, the Yakima Herald-Republic Editorial Board brought together the candidates — and in the case of ballot initiatives, proponents and opponents of the measures — for back-and-forth discussions of the issues related to the respective campaigns. From these meetings, the editorial board offers its endorsements as further information for voters to consider as they arrive at their decisions.

## **Governor: Bill Bryant**

Two former Yakima Valley residents seek to be the state's chief executive. Bryant, a Republican, lived for several years in Yakima while promoting Valley fruit exports overseas; Democratic first-term Gov. Jay Inslee served in the Legislature and Congress while a Selah resident in the 1980s and 1990s. Our decision stems from Bryant's business experience, his moderate views and our agreement with Bryant's assertion that Inslee has not brought the full force of the governor's office to resolving the issue of K-12 education funding; this has been a critical issue since the state Supreme Court's 2012 ruling that the state was not meeting its paramount duty of adequately funding education. The Legislature must move on the issue this year, and Bryant has convinced us that he will make education a priority.

## **Lieutenant governor: Cyrus Habib**

Habib, a Democrat, and Marty McClendon, a Republican, both bring partisan inclinations to an office whose most visible duties are presiding over the state Senate and filling in for the governor when the chief executive is out of state. Habib, who has represented Seattle's eastern suburbs in the Legislature, proves much more knowledgeable about the issues and has a track record of working with lawmakers of both parties.

## **Secretary of state: Kim Wyman**

Wyman, the only current Republican office holder who has been elected statewide, has provided solid stewardship of the office, which oversees elections, registers private corporations, keeps historical records and regulates charitable organizations. She faces a smart and savvy challenger in Democrat Tina Podlodowski, who argues that the office could do more to encourage voter registration and turnout. But Wyman has handled her duties with admirable fairness — essential in the critical matter of election oversight.

### **State treasurer: Duane Davidson**

Washington's Top Two primary system bestowed us with two Republican general election candidates after Democrats split their primary votes three ways. Davidson, serving his fourth term as Benton County treasurer, brings a very different approach from that of Michael Waite, a Seattle investment manager. Both have the skills for the job, and Waite argues the office could use a fresh approach. But we side with Davidson's relationships with state government officials and knowledge about how government transactions work.

### **State auditor: Pat McCarthy**

Both McCarthy and opponent Mark Miloscia offer strong résumés to an office charged with holding state and local governments open and accountable. McCarthy is a Democrat in her second term as Pierce County executive, and Miloscia is a Democrat-turned-Republican who has served 16 years in the Legislature representing a south King County district. This is an office suffering through the disruptive tenure of Democrat Troy Kelley, who decided not to seek re-election. We believe McCarthy has the right administrative experiences and proper temperament to bring the Auditor's Office back to solid footing.

### **Attorney general: Bob Ferguson**

The first-term Democrat didn't even draw a Republican opponent, leaving him with unknown and underfinanced Libertarian Josh Trumbull, who practices law in Snohomish County. Ferguson has been aggressive in consumer protection cases and an advocate for open meeting law and has maintained the state's pressure on the federal government in the Hanford nuclear reservation cleanup. He has taken on groups of all political philosophies on campaign finance laws.

### **Public lands commissioner: Hilary Franz**

This is a close call between two candidates with starkly different résumés and instincts but who publicly profess similar policies about timber sales to support school construction and on fighting wildfires. Franz, a Democrat, is an environmental attorney who was involved in the state's Kittitas County land purchase that is part of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. Republican Steve McLaughlin is a retired U.S. Navy commander who has trained almost 1,000 firefighters and public safety personnel in incident management. Franz would need to keep her distance from her most strident environmental supporters, but she has demonstrated skills in compromise and working out practical solutions.

### **Insurance commissioner: Mike Kreidler**

Seeking his fifth term in the job, Kreidler, a Democrat, touts his stewardship of the Affordable Care Act implementation in Washington state. The ACA has its obvious

problems, but the rollout has gone smoother in this state than elsewhere. Republican Richard Schrock is a Snohomish County fire district commissioner and former director of the state Department of Commerce under Gov. John Spellman back in the 1980s. Schrock asks some pointed and legitimate questions about Kreidler's assertions about the ACA's success, but Kreidler has kept the office on stable footing and has a track record of working for consumers.

### **Superintendent of public instruction: Chris Reykdal**

This is a close call between two qualified candidates with similar capabilities but very different styles and strengths. Reykdal, a Thurston County Democratic legislator, is a former teacher and school board member who worked for 14 years as a finance administrator for the state's community and technical college system. His opponent, Erin Jones, is a former award-winning teacher and assistant superintendent in the SPI office who now is an administrator in the Tacoma School District. Reykdal gets the slight edge with his work background and legislative connections for this nonpartisan position.

### **State Supreme Court Position 1: Mary Yu**

Yu, who was appointed to the court in 2014, was not on the court when it made its controversial 2012 McCleary decision, which ruled the state was not meeting its paramount duty of adequately funding public schools. Later, the court held the state in contempt and imposed a \$100,000-a-day-fine. She generally endorses the court's approach as one that will prompt the Legislature to act. Her challenger is David DeWolf, who recently retired after teaching at Gonzaga University Law School for 28 years. DeWolf argues the court is telling the Legislature how to do its job, while Yu replies that the court is giving lawmakers the room to craft a decision. Yu brings a nimble legal mind and 14 years of trial court experience, and she has earned a full term.

### **State Supreme Court Position 5: Barbara Madsen**

There's a local connection here, with Kittitas County Prosecuting Attorney Greg Zempel challenging a three-term incumbent whom colleagues have selected twice to be chief justice. Zempel argues the court is "not respectful" of the Legislature on the McCleary decision, while Madsen says the McCleary ruling and legislative response reflect a "natural tension" that the federal and state founders intended. Zempel would bring the perspective of a 22-year prosecutor; overall, Madsen displays an impressive depth and breadth of judicial knowledge, and it is clear why colleagues have named her chief justice.

### **State Supreme Court Position 6: Charles Wiggins**

Of the three Supreme Court races, this was the closest call. Wiggins is completing his first term and is a former appellate attorney who has served on the state Court of Appeals and as a part-time Superior Court judge. His opponent, Dave Larson, is presiding judge of the Federal Way Municipal Court and former president of the Federal

Way school board. Larson actually agrees with the McCleary decision but says the court has focused too much on making the Legislature come up with more money for schools. Wiggins responds that the ruling draws on precedent, that the state went years without a plan and the \$100,000-a-day fine got the state's attention. Wiggins' experience and knowledge give him the edge.

### **Initiative 1433: No**

The measure to raise the state's minimum wage in phases to \$13.50 by 2020 also would require employers to provide paid sick leave. This may run afoul of the state's single-subject law; outside of that, the steep increase may force employers to hire fewer workers and to automate jobs where possible. While this may be a solution in higher-cost Puget Sound cities, the one-size-fits-all approach poses a risk to Yakima Valley businesses — and to jobs for their workers — that isn't worth the promised rewards.

### **Initiative 1464: No**

The measure would set up a campaign finance system similar to Seattle's "democracy voucher" program that the city's voters approved last year. The money would come from repealing the sales-tax exemption for border counties, which would hurt sales in those communities. It has the potential for clunky implementation; let's see how the Seattle experiment works out before trying it statewide.

### **Initiative 1491: No**

This measure wades into the debate over gun violence and mental health by restricting gun access to someone deemed dangerous because of his or her behavior. Advocates have all the right intentions, but the most visible opposition comes from the mental health community, which fears the court orders could stigmatize those who need medical help. The gun lobby has been curiously quiet on this one. There is no questioning the intentions of the initiative backers, and this is a tough call, but the prospect of unintended consequences edges us onto the no side.

### **Initiative 1501: No**

The ballot title opens with seemingly benign language about targeting consumer fraud aimed at senior citizens, but the real motive is found in a following clause, which reads, "...and exempt certain information of vulnerable individuals and in-home caregivers from public disclosure." This exemption to the Public Records Act would make care workers' contact information available to the Service Employees International Union. The Public Records Act already has too many exemptions; it doesn't need this one.

### **Initiative 732: No**

Proponents have proposed essentially a tax swap designed to be revenue-neutral. The measure would impose a carbon-emission tax on fossil fuels and fossil-fuel-generated

electricity; in return, it would cut the state sales tax from 6.5 cents on the dollar to 5.5 cents and cut the business and occupation tax on manufacturing businesses. The initiative goes to great pains to be revenue-neutral and ease the pain on businesses, but we fear it would hit the agricultural sector harder than other others. Also, a state analysis has determined it would actually cut revenue to the state, at a time when legislators are grappling with school funding.

### **Initiative 735: No**

With approval of this measure, the state would join the move to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, the one that deems money spent on political advocacy to be free speech. But it could also limit advocacy by nonprofit groups such as the National Rifle Association, Planned Parenthood and labor unions; this is too wide a net.

### **Senate Joint Resolution No. 8210: Yes**

This involves the bipartisan, five-member Washington State Redistricting Commission, which redraws congressional and legislative districts every 10 years. This moves up by 45 days the deadline for the commission to finish its work. It won unanimous approval in the state House and Senate

### **4th District Congress: Dan Newhouse**

This is a rematch of 2014's all-Republican contest between Newhouse and Clint Didier, but with different dynamics. The mainstream Newhouse is now a first-term incumbent against tea party favorite Didier, and Newhouse has developed a track record of working for the district in a number of areas. Among them: advocating funding for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, supporting trade deals that benefit agriculture, helping veterans navigate the VA system and others. Didier opposes federal funding for the integrated plan, criticizes trade policies and wants to slash the Veterans Affairs health system to a "skeleton crew." Didier would be a voice of protest, but Newhouse is a voice of reason who can make government work for the 4th District.

### **14th District Senate: Curtis King**

King has proved very effective in the Legislature. As chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, he pushed through an 11.9-cent-per-gallon gas tax hike that helps finance a \$16.1 billion transportation package. King also supports state funding for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, which is essential to the future health of the Valley's agricultural industry. King's opponent, Amanda Richards, a Klickitat County resident, has hung her campaign largely on opposition to the gas tax increase, She also opposes continued state funding for the integrated plan. King understands how to make government work for the district and deserves another term.

### **14th District House Position 1: Norm Johnson**

Johnson, a Republican incumbent who is a former teacher and school administrator, is well-positioned to help craft a legislative response to the state Supreme Court's McCleary ruling. His Democratic opponent, Susan Soto Palmer, speaks eloquently about how poverty issues are not partisan ones, but Johnson has served his constituents well and deserves another term.

#### **14th District House Position 2: Gina McCabe**

McCabe, a Republican completing her first term, has stepped up ably in her first term with legislation that benefits constituents. A timely measure is one to provide training for first responders in how to help people with disabilities in emergency situations. Her Democratic opponent, John Eric Adams, is a Columbia Gorge winemaker who is not mounting a serious campaign. McCabe already is a productive member of the Legislature and deserves another term.

#### **15th District House Position 2: David Taylor**

Taylor, one of the most conservative House Republican members, faces Democrat A.J. Cooper, a fitness instructor and former math teacher. We don't agree with all of Taylor's votes, but he has command of many issues facing the Valley, and that knowledge makes him the better choice.

#### **Yakima County Commission, District 1: Mike Leita**

In this Republican-only contest, three-term incumbent Leita stresses continuity and his experience in leading the county through the national economic recession and in trying to resolve the jail issue, which he inherited. Challenger Eric Geary, a Yakima County water resources program manager, offers a number of interesting perspectives, especially on water issues. Their main difference seems to involve the dispute involving County Clerk Janelle Riddle, with Geary arguing the commissioners are stepping on Riddle's right to run the department and Leita defending the commissioners' actions. In our view, Leita has made his case for stability and for retaining his seat.

#### **Yakima County Commission, District 2: Ron Anderson**

Another all-Republican matchup brings us two capable candidates who offer decades of business and civic experience in the Yakima Valley. Anderson grew up in the Lower Valley and now operates a Yakima realty firm, and Debra Manjarrez is a certified public accountant who grew up in a farming family and has longtime connections with the Wapato area. Manjarrez would bring financial acumen to the commission, but we are swayed by Anderson's depth and breadth of knowledge and his ability to look down the road to the future.

#### **Yakima County Superior Court, Position 3: Doug Federspiel**

Incumbent Federspiel, completing his first Superior Court term after two years on District Court, has a challenger in Sunnyside attorney Alex Newhouse. This shapes up as an insider-vs.-outsider contest. Newhouse brings an interesting range of experience that would bring a different perspective to the courthouse; before opening his private practice in 2012, he worked for the Yakima County Department of Assigned Counsel. Federspiel, with his judicial experience on top of his years in private practice and as a corporate attorney, offers enough reasons to retain his court seat.

- *Yakima Herald-Republic Editorial Board members taking part in endorsement interviews are Bob Crider, Alison Bath, Frank Purdy and Karen Troianello.*