

Josephine County Democrats

Forum April 12, 2022

Tobias Read

Read says he wished he could be present in person but the upside of virtual meetings is that he can visit with people in places he wouldn't have time to get to during his campaign. Hard to believe only 5 weeks to go. Running because he's dissatisfied with where Oregon is right now. One, there are too many people living on the streets. This isn't just a Portland issue, it's true across the state. Gun violence is a concern he says, and he's concerned about education. Read says there is a lag between our good intentions and the execution that's required to deliver results. It's important to pass good legislation and appropriate money but that's where the hard work begins. He's observed, as Treasurer, delivering results, creating new programs, revamping those needing an update and feels good about what he's done in his executive position. He tells Democrats this isn't a year to consider the governor's race as a "layup." The landscape doesn't look particularly friendly for Democrats and what's needed is someone who can carry our message across the state and who is comfortable listening to people with whom we don't always agree. Read says he's the one able to assemble the coalitions needed to win a tough race in a multi-candidate field. He pointed out he's the only one in the race who has run statewide and won twice. He then turned to answering questions after asking for our vote.

Question: What can be done about the urban/rural divide? What do you think you can do?

Read – Says he'll use his "unfair" advantage of being raised in Idaho where he learned to exist in "unfriendly" territory as a Democrat as well as the humility and confidence to show up in conservative parts of the state and asking residents what they perceive their challenges and barriers are and how the state can be a better partner. Read believes there's a lot more that unites Oregonians than divides them. We all want some of the same basic things and we should start with that kind of understanding. As an example, he said the state Land Board just worked out a plan to turn the Elliott Forest into the Elliott State Research Forest by bringing together "really entrenched, hostile interests" into something everyone can live with. The way opposing sides worked together to solve differences and achieve a goal doing that can serve as a model, he said, for tackling other difficult issues in the state. So what I can do, says Read, is show up, show up with humility, with a posture of wanting to help, to remove barriers and make it easier for people to live up to their potential.

Question: What do you plan to do regarding drug addiction and services needed?

This needs to be treated with urgency since we're on the top of the list for people with substance abuse disorder and at the bottom of the list in terms of access to treatment. We need to improve access to treatment by making sure providers are adequately paid to attract more people into the field. This will be a priority as governor, he said.

Question: There's a lot of federal money coming through the state for broadband. The attitude here is that we won't get any of it and yet our need, particularly during COVID was urgent.

Read – This is an issue where urban and rural are pulling in the same direction. It's a serious problem here and also in urban areas because of the way connectivity is measured. It's very flawed because if a

single house has access to broadband the whole area is considered to be served so both urban and rural areas have this issue so we can all be pulling together to solve it. COVID and recent wildfires revealed that broadband is no longer a luxury but a necessity for education, public safety and economic development and we need to use the dollars coming from the federal government to make sure this is addressed across the state. It should now be considered essential infrastructure. We will make sure those dollars are distributed equitable across the state.

Rural areas suffer from a chronic lack of jobs and affordable housing and chronic poverty. Do you support funding a robust clean-energy economy to create jobs and prepare for a climate protective economy?

Read – That’s an enthusiastic yes. We have tremendous economic opportunity by embracing and adapting to measures to combat the climate catastrophe. Lots of opportunity in Oregon with off-shore wind, precision agriculture, compensating landowners for increasing the carbon content of their soil. We can make ourselves much more resilient and secure economically by finding ways to bring these about and this is one of my highest priorities as candidate, Treasurer and certainly will be as Governor.

Question: As governor you would be in charge of public schools as well. Are you satisfied with the LGBTQ and sexuality education? Would you take it further? Do you see it as necessary to role it back? Particularly K-5?

Read: The important thing here is for everyone to have confidence and the ability to be who they are, fully. There are so many challenges in front of us, that when we do anything that leaves talent on the sidelines we’re doing ourselves a disservice.

Question: If there is another COVID surge what would your response be? Are you supportive of mask mandates, vaccine mandates, business closures, church closures etc.?

Read: It depends a lot on the circumstance but what I can say with confidence is that I’m always going to follow the science and seek to be clear about our priorities and communication. Gives Gov Brown a lot of credit for making tough decisions early on, we are safer and more people are alive and healthy as a result of that, but I was frustrated by the inconsistency of communications and frustrated that at one point, bars and restaurants were open while schools were not. so I will be really clear about my priorities, keep schools open, that’s essential for the academic progress and mental health of students and the families and economies work.

Question: Could you elaborate on the question just before the last one?

I understand the question. I’m not sure I have a really good answer to that yet. We have 197 locally elected school boards that do things differently and trying to respect, to the degree we can, the differences in those communities while at the same time saying we have some basic expectations across Oregon that people will have the security and dignity to be who they are and those priorities are reflected in the way we deal with curriculum. But I fear, in answering this question there may be more in it than I’m aware of so feel free to add to my understanding. I’m not sure I’m being specific enough but I’m not sure I can without more detail in the question. And we can follow up offline if now isn’t the right time.

Question: What will you do to help Southern Oregon with illegal marijuana grows? We have cartels in our area and they are dangerous. Southern Oregon didn't vote for marijuana but we're stuck with the ramifications.

Read: We need to be a lot more aggressive in law enforcement and making sure they have the tools. As Treasurer I have been working hard for access to banking services for cannabis-related business. It's important for public safety and law enforcement. When there are bank accounts it's easier for law enforcement to track who is not following the law. The trick of moving from a black market to a regulated economy has been bumpy and we need to look at how communities are suffering under that and bring urgency to problems there. Tobiasread.com. He'll be happy to follow up.