

Latah County Democratic Candidates Primary Election, May 15, 2018

The League of Women Voters of Moscow asked each candidate two questions. The responses are grouped by the positions sought. The candidate statements appear as submitted without analysis, edits or commentary by the League.

Two democratic candidates have no opposition in the primary and will not have opposition in the general election. Because of that reason, and to give more time to positions which require a choice either in the primary or general election, these two candidates were not asked to participate in the forum. They are: Henrienne K. Westberg running for Latah County Clerk and Catherine M. Mabbutt running for Latah County Coroner.

District 5 – Democratic Candidates

Democratic Senator Candidate: David Nelson

David Nelson

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

In my work, I co-founded a successful software company and grew that business to employ 50 people around the world. It was recently acquired by a major company in the field. This experience puts me in tune with the demands of operating and growing a business, working with and fairly compensating employees and dealing with government agencies.

I have been connected to the Latah County community for most of my life. As a kid, I helped my dad campaign for County Commissioner and learned from him how to deal fairly and respectfully with all voters. In my adult life, my wife and I have helped organized the campaigns to pass supplemental overrides levies for Moscow schools. I helped manage our regional Rotary Youth Exchange program. I was the chairman of the Latah County Democrats from 2008 to 2016 and worked to get Paulette Jordan, Shirley Ringo, Tom Lamar, Dan Schmidt elected.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

Education and workforce development are the most basic and effective economic development activities our state can accomplish and I feel are our most pressing issues.

While K-12 education funding in Idaho has stabilized and the five-year implementation of the career ladder has helped, our legislature is too self-congratulatory. Our rate of students obtaining degree or certificate post high school is falling. We consistently rank in the bottom of the state comparisons (Education Week 2018: #48 Overall and #49 in school finance). The recent Educator Pipeline Report from the Idaho State Board of Education identifies a significant teacher shortage in Idaho that is a symptom of our insufficient education funding. I will work to enhance the education of all Idaho students.

Democratic Representative Seat A Candidate: Margaret R. Gannon

Margaret R. Gannon

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

I spent 16 years on the St Maries school Board. 14 of those years as chairperson. Worked hard on policy and education law. Also was involved with Idaho School Board Assoc. Executive Board and worked with legislators to craft or trying to craft good laws and funding for schools. After leaving the school board I have spent the last two years on St Maries City Council. Worked on ambulance board and with setting up a bond that recently passed.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

The issues facing Idaho right now are many. We are in desperate need of a much more balanced government. Health care for many has become a political hit button and many fellow citizens need coverage.

Idaho infrastructure is aging and we need to invest in our state and all of it's beautiful by ways. Truck traffic and increase in vehicles has been stressful and roads and bridges have not been updated

And there is education. Funding formulas need to be addressed. While many brag about cutting taxes, those taxes are shifted to local school districts. Rural schools need to have the same resources as urban schools and we need to talk pay and recruitment of teachers. There are issues with pre school and higher education. We talk about work force ready but continuing education is out of reach fir many

Democratic Representative Seat B Candidates: Terry Hardman, Laurene Sorensen

Terry Hardman: No response

Laurene Sorensen

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

Part of my preparation is the work I do. I'm a mediator, and I deal with Idaho laws every day. I see the real-world effects of poorly drafted, poorly conceived laws and the pain and significant cost they cause to Idahoans. And I'm tired of watching each new session bring more ill-conceived bills that will cost us more of our precious tax revenue to defend against constitutional challenges. I currently serve my community on the board of the Moscow Food Co-op, as well as the Moscow Board of Adjustment, and these roles give me further insights into the issues of growth, competition, and workforce development.

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(Laurene Sorensen continued.)

But the job of a legislator is ultimately about listening to people. The most critical part of my preparation is knowing the issues my neighbors struggle with. At work, I listen to the concerns of young families as they make important decisions about their future, middle-aged women struggling to care for their ailing family members, and entrepreneurs on their way up (and down). Every day, I hear about my friends and neighbors' struggles and triumphs – and what helped or hindered them. As I campaign I am constantly seeking out more opportunities to listen to people and encourage them to use their voice for change. This is about more than an election to me. This is about making sure our communities are heard in Boise. We should do everything we can to make life just a little bit easier when and where we can.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

Our state's commitment to public education is a bold one: "It shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free, common schools. (ID Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 1.) But there are gross inconsistencies among Idaho school districts. Some have school 5 days a week, while others can only afford 4. Some offer free pre-K; many don't. School happens in obsolete, sometimes crumbling buildings. Some students have the opportunity to learn vocational skills like welding, animal husbandry, and programming before they graduate from high school. But for too many, that opportunity doesn't exist. We can do better than this.

If elected, I will propose legislation to make the state responsible for financing and maintaining the physical infrastructure of education: school buildings, playing fields, science labs, and other school facilities. This would lead to economies of scale in building and operating, as well as uniform standards for quality and security in school facilities. In addition, I would propose reducing the vote required for a school district to pass a levy to a simple majority. Finally, I would require all statewide income and property tax exemptions to be audited diligently to make sure that they are still serving their purpose and are claimed only by those currently entitled to them. It's not about raising taxes, it's about making sure that our resources are deployed effectively.

I will also encourage expansion of our public 2-year college system into more communities by having satellite campuses in local high schools. The school districts could charge rent for use of their classrooms at night and on weekends and apply those funds to operating expenses. Two-year colleges are a great way to defray the expense of a degree: students can live at home while getting an associate's degree or certificate, and later transfer to a four-year school if they wish. In addition, it will be easier to cover the cost of specialized classrooms such as metal shops if they will have additional users.

Finally, I will support science and health education standards that reflect our modern world.

Latah County Democratic Candidates

1st District Democratic County Commissioner Candidate: Kathie LaFortune

Kathie LaFortune

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

I have lived in Latah County, first Moscow and now Viola, for 28 years, and have raised two active children who attended Moscow Public Schools. I have served as a volunteer in my children's schools, and for many organizations including Moscow Area Mountain Bike Association, PCEI, and Rendezvous in the Park. My career as a pediatric physical therapist has taken me down nearly every back road in Latah County and inside all of its public schools. Through this work I have come to know Latah County, with all of its diversity, which is both wonderful and challenging. The families I have served call themselves republicans, democrats, and independents. They are from all walks of life and have varied backgrounds. Since deciding to run for County Commissioner in December of 2017, I have made it my goal to attend every city council meeting within the county, to attend lunches at many of the senior meal sites, and to participate in as many local fundraising events as time and money allow. I am also visiting every department at the county courthouse to see how they function and learn of their roles and responsibilities.

I have years of experience working with people, listening to their concerns and dreams, and helping them solve complex and important problems. I have learned over the years that to be most effective in problem solving, it's best to listen and attend to everyone's needs and expectations, rather than entering a room with a pre-set plan. This is how county government operates best: being present and open to all input, tweaking what works well to make it even better, and facing challenges as a team.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

I am running for Latah County Commissioner because my family and I have benefited from all this county has to offer for over two decades, not because I see major problems in Latah County. The current commissioner for my district, Dick Walser, is a neighbor and a friend and his shoes will be hard to fill. I am confident that I will bring the time, energy, and skills needed to accomplish this task, and that I will thoroughly and thoughtfully address the issues that are unique to each part of our county as they arise.

Latah county has a long history of working together to manage business and solve problems. It is the hard work and generosity of the citizens and employees of Latah county that make it such a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

If elected as County Commissioner, I promise to work together with current commissioners Tom Lamar and Dave McGraw and to continue the legacy of former commissioners Dick Walser, Tom Stroschien, Jennifer Barrett, and Jack Nelson to help make Latah county function even better to serve all of us who call this beautiful place home. I promise to listen, to learn about things I don't yet know or understand, to work with you to solve problems, and to be present and celebrate that which you already do so well.

3rd District Democratic County Commissioner Candidate: Carey Scott

Carey Scott

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

I have been a resident of Latah County for 36 years and have held the position of Precinct Captain for Precinct #10 in Moscow for the last three years, As someone who has been on the Central Committee for the County for three years and a longtime Latah county resident, I would like to further improve upon lives of everyone in Latah County, not just Moscow.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

Two of the most pressing issues I feel in Latah County today is a lack of jobs for County Residents, more so for the residents of our smaller towns such as Bovill, Deary, Kendrick, Onaway; and the problem of the prevalence of narcotics such as Methamphetamine and Heroin. I would like to see Latah County attract more businesses which will provide more jobs and growth for the smaller towns. Manufacturing, Guide Positions, more civic projects that keep the jobs within the towns, so residents don't have to commute to Moscow, thereby keeping the money in their own towns. The US Government used Civilian Contractors in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s to build many park and recreation trails and buildings, and I would like to see some of a return to that. Use local labor to work for the county on improving trails, streams, parks, buildings, roads, bridges, etc.

As far as the Narcotic problem, I would like to ensure that local Police and the Latah County Sheriff's office focus stronger on the reduction and elimination of Meth and Heroin in our County, and to focus less on minor narcotics such as Marijuana. CNN had an article recently about the reduction of Opioid addiction in states that have legalized Marijuana and Medical Marijuana. Here is an excerpt: (CNN)Experts have proposed using medical marijuana to help Americans struggling with opioid addiction. Now, two studies suggest that there is merit to that strategy.

The studies, published Monday in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine <<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.0266>>, compared opioid prescription patterns in states that have enacted medical cannabis laws with those that have not. One of the studies looked at opioid prescriptions covered by Medicare Part D between 2010 and 2015, while the other looked at opioid prescriptions covered by Medicaid between 2011 and 2016. The researchers found that states that allow the use of cannabis for medical purposes had 2.21 million fewer daily doses of opioids prescribed per year under Medicare Part D, compared with those states without medical cannabis laws. Opioid prescriptions under Medicaid also dropped by 5.88% in states with medical cannabis laws compared with states without such laws, according to the studies. "This study adds one more brick in the wall in the argument that cannabis clearly has medical applications," said David Bradford <<http://spia.uga.edu/faculty-member/w-david-bradford/>>, professor of public administration and policy at the University of Georgia and a lead author of the Medicare study. "And for pain patients in particular, our work adds to the argument that cannabis can be
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(Carey Scott continued.)

effective." Medicare Part D, the optional prescription drug benefit plan for those enrolled in Medicare, covers more than 42 million Americans, including those 65 or older. Medicaid provides health coverage to more than 73 million low-income individuals in the US, according to the program's website <<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/program-information/medicaid-and-chip-enrollment-data/report-highlights/index.html>>. "Medicare and Medicaid publishes this data, and we're free to use it, and anyone who's interested can download the data," Bradford said. "But that means that we don't know what's going on with the privately insured and the uninsured population, and for that, I'm afraid the data sets are proprietary and expensive. The new research comes as the United States remains entangled in the worst opioid epidemic the world has ever seen. Opioid overdose has risen dramatically over the past 15 years and has been implicated in over 500,000 deaths since 2000 <http://smart-ny.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/StartSMART_DPA_Marijuana_Opioids_3.15.2018.pdf>--more than the number of Americans killed in World War II <<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>>. "As somebody who treats patients with opioid use disorders, this crisis is very real. These patients die every day, and it's quite shocking in many ways," said Dr. Kevin Hill <<http://drkevinhill.com/about/>>, an addiction psychiatrist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, who was not involved in the new studies. "We have had overuse of certain prescription opioids over the years, and it's certainly contributed to the opioid crisis that we're feeling," he added. "I don't think that's the only reason, but certainly, it was too easy at many points to get prescriptions for opioids." Today, more than 90 Americans a day die from opioid overdose, resulting in more than 42,000 deaths per year, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>>. Opioid overdose recently overtook vehicular accidents and shooting deaths as the most common cause of accidental death in the United States, the CDC says <<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6450a3.htm>>." <<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/health/medical-cannabis-law-opioid-prescription-study/index.html>>

Latah County Treasurer Democratic Candidate: B.J. Swanson

B.J. Swanson

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

I am a retired commercial bank vice president and manager. I worked for 30+ years in management, budgeting, financial analysis, investments and negotiating. After retirement, I started my own business doing commercial loan underwriting for a local credit union, financial modeling, business risk assessment, business recruitment, economic development and construction management; just to name a few. I have assisted with many successful economic and community development projects in all areas of Latah County.

In addition, I have volunteered my time to make Latah County a better place. I have served as president of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce, president of Latah Economic Development Council, chair of the board of Gritman Medical Center, treasurer of League of Women Voters of Moscow and charter member of the Latah Trail Foundation. I currently serve as vice chair of the Idaho Department of Labor Workforce Development Council, vice chair of Idaho Health Facilities Authority and former chair of Idaho Department of Commerce Economic Advisory Council. I have a proven successful experience in all aspects of the Latah County Treasurer's position.

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

While I believe Latah County government is well run and responsive to citizens, we can do better. I have the knowledge and experience to bring new services and opportunities to the people of Latah County to save money and better utilize taxpayer funds. In addition to the current Latah County Treasurer duties, I'd like to offer all communities assistance with budgeting, including grant budgets. There are grant opportunities available and often the approve/decline grant decision is based on the budget presented. I have worked on many grants, both writing and reviewing, and am prepared to assist whenever possible.

Another opportunity would be requests for proposal (RFP) for temporary funds to maximize earnings. For example, investing at the highest rate of interest available for the property tax prepayments brought on by reaction to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and at the same time complying with government investment policies.

I have done successful financial modeling for businesses for many years. I plan to bring that skill to Latah County and our communities. Financial modeling can help determine if it's worthwhile to purchase a building, construct a new community center, purchase a large piece of equipment or purchase a new software system.

I look forward to serving the people of Latah County as your Treasurer.

Latah County Assessor Democratic Candidate: Rod Wakefield

Rod Wakefield

What experience has prepared you for the position for which you are a candidate?

Experience:

14 years Assessor Office experience with 11 years at Latah County

Idaho Certified Property Tax Appraiser

interactions with thousands of Latah County property owners both in the office and out in the field

Good working relationships with the staff, other county offices and their staffs, and the elected officials

Knowledgeable about office procedure, timelines, exemptions, urban renewal and the property rolls

Classes and continuing education through the Idaho State Tax Commission and the International Association of Assessing Officers

I have served as Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and President of the Idaho Association of Assessing Personnel

Contacts include Assessors and Appraisers from other counties, State Tax Commission personnel, International Association of Assessing Officers members, and Idaho Association of Assessing Personnel members

24 years with the U.S. Postal Service with a majority of that time dealing directly with the public

38 years public service

What is the most pressing issue facing Latah County or State of Idaho (depending upon the office for which you are a candidate) and how do you plan to address it if you are elected?

The Assessor is dictated by the laws, statutes and rules of Idaho. The Assessor must follow the law and the guidelines set by the State Tax Commission. The office should be transparent and fair and equitable in their assessments.

The most pressing issue facing the Assessor's office is for someone to be the administrator of the law and guidelines, the Assessor office and Vehicle Licensing.

Some things I would like to accomplish if elected are:

To be one of the first counties for the implementation of new appraisal software the State Tax Commission is supposed to launch.

I will streamline our appraisal process for more efficiency.

I have trained and mentored most of our new appraisal staff and I would like to continue on with that mentoring in this different roll.

Courses and education for the staff that target areas in the office that need to be adressed.

Of course the biggest issue is maintaining fair and equitable assessments and to be in compliance with the State Tax Commission.

Given my many years of public service and my experience and knowledge of the Assessor Office I believe I would make the best fit as Latah County Assessor.