

ENDORSEMENTS

BrainstormNW's May Primary 2004 Endorsements

Rough and Tumble

Tim Phillips, Republican for Congressional District One

What separates Tim Phillips and Goli Ameri in the First District primary for *BrainstormNW* is inches—what separates them from each other are vigorous, rough and tumble campaigns that will test their mettle and prepare them for the finals with incumbent Democrat David Wu. This is a critical race for the Republicans and either candidate is well positioned to win in the fall.

In the final analysis, the nod goes to Tim Phillips. There is a level of enthusiasm, determination and preparedness that suggests that he is better equipped to displace Wu after three lackluster terms.

Both Phillips and Ameri are self-described fiscal conservatives and social moderates, and both have solid financial backing. But Phillips has also created and grown a thriving local business, while Ameri's business credentials seem thin. On national issues, both support President Bush's tax cuts and the efforts to make them permanent. Both support the War on Terrorism, and Ameri, an emigre from pre-Ayatollah Khomeini Iran, has personal experience with radical Islamic terrorism. Each is moderate on the abortion issue, supporting abortion rights, but opposing partial birth abortion and supporting parental notification.

Phillips has been criticized for sitting out the Measure 30 fight while Ameri was instrumental in gathering thousands of signatures for the initiative petition. Ameri has been criticized for the amount of contributions she has received from the far-flung Iranian American population while Phillips has gathered the majority of his contributions at home. (*We would note that this was never an issue for the newspapers when Wu sought and accepted substantial contributions from the Chinese American community during his campaigns as a Democrat.*) And Phillips has been criticized for lawsuits by his investment firm's clients in the aftermath of the stock market collapse of 2001–02—a fact he readily acknowledges but asserts is at a significantly smaller ratio than other members of the industry averaged in the same time period.

So what is the difference? For the editorial board of *BrainstormNW* it is about connecting with your audience. And here, Phillips has the edge. With him there is the impression that he listens and is eager to respond to your questions or concerns. And with Ameri there is the impression that she is preparing to work the next group. These are matters of style but they will count significantly in a race with the aloof Mr. Wu.

In the end, the First District will have a formidable candidate with either Phillips or Ameri, but the contrast with Wu in connecting with First District voters goes to Phillips. At the same time we urge Ameri to stay engaged in Oregon politics and develop her skills with voters for a future run.

An Easy Call Made Difficult

Jackie Winters, Republican for Congressional District Five

Jackie Winters is the model Republican candidate in a district that holds a Republican registration edge—a winnable race. Smart, articulate, seasoned through several sessions in the Oregon legislature, and an up-from-the-trenches entrepreneurial bio that is straight from the bible of mid-America values. BUT—we'll get to the “but” later.

What makes Jackie attractive is her unrelenting work ethic. Displaced as a victim of the Vanport flood in 1948, Winters *worked* as a school girl picking strawberries and tap dancing in social halls, moving from there to domestic help, to office worker and eventually to Oregon Ombudsman for Gov. Vic Atiyeh. She and her husband opened Jackie's Ribs, which grew to a successful small business. In every instance it was hard work that led to success. Winters understands the value of a job and of hard work.

As a legislator she has developed a reputation for pursuing government reform and reducing regulatory red tape. She gets high marks from the natural resources industry and small business groups.

As a candidate she has pledged to support President Bush's tax cuts. She supports the War on Terrorism and has an existing relationship with President Bush. Winters will be an active team player for President Bush and a continued Republican majority in Congress. And now the “but”—Winters voted for the tax increases of Measure 30, without referral to the voters. As a result, Oregonians were forced to spend time, money and effort to refer and defeat the issue through the initiative process. Winters is defensive, but not apologetic. Winters gets *BrainstormNW's* endorsement, though we suggest that she admit her mistake. But it's time to move on, with Winters for Congress, District 5.

The Republicans are blessed by having quality candidates, such as Winters and Zupancic in their congressional primaries in Oregon. Jim Zupancic is a bright, articulate young lawyer with a wealth of experience in international trade that could serve Oregon well in Congress. He has focused his campaign upon his opposition to Measure 30 and support of President Bush's tax cuts, which he wants to make permanent. He wants to place spending limits on Congress.

But Zupancic signed a pledge during the last legislative race to support increased funding for schools even if it meant increased taxes. He now says that he would have only supported a tax increase if it were referred to the voters. *BrainstormNW* would feel more comfortable in this instance with a track record of fiscal discipline and, therefore, we urge Mr. Zupancic, a solid, strong candidate, to continue and deepen his political involvement, and to prove his fiscal conservatism for a future run at the state house or Congress.

Battle Scars and Soft Skills

Betsy Close, Republican for Secretary of State

These days being a legislator seems to take a heavy toll on those who step forward to serve us. In the course of our interviews it was easy to tell who was stepping up to the political plate fresh and enthusiastic, and who had been worn and scarred by previous duty. At times this became somewhat distracting—one candidate so optimistic but perhaps naïve, the other more shrill, combative, but probably more practical about what could and should be accomplished.

The race for Secretary of State is an important statewide office for Republicans. It's critical for R's, who currently hold no statewide seats, to field polished, optimistic, likeable candidates with a good chance of winning in November. And while Fred Granum, an attorney, small business exec and entrepreneur from Cedar Mill, seems to fill this bill very well, in the end it was impossible not to reward Close for her three terms of service in the Oregon House, representing District 15.

While serving in the legislature Close has been a steady, reliable vote for fiscal conservatism, including casting tough “no” votes on tax increases and keeping a sharp eye on new spending. Close also has been a reliable vote for education reform—charter schools, and smart reforms in land use and forest policy.

Both candidates noted their interest in de-politicizing the Secretary of State's office, in additional audits, and in better monitoring of elections process. Both had sharp criticism for incumbent Bill Bradbury. The difference—Granum seems to believe that all can be repaired if we all just get along better. On the other hand, Close seems nearly as partisan in her criticisms as Bradbury has been in his execution of the duties of office. Still, Close is probably more in touch with the realities of the politics involved, and thus may develop a stronger campaign.

There's no doubt that Fred Granum brings polish, relaxed optimism and strong business experience to this primary race. Still *BrainstormNW's* endorsement goes to Close, though we think she should rein in any vestiges of legislative partisanship as she campaigns to represent *all the voters* of Oregon. But we didn't fall off the turnip truck yesterday—this is a high stakes race for what is currently a highly politicized office. And a successful campaign will require a tough, clear-eyed competitor like Betsy Close, who may have battle scars, but she earned them representing Oregonians through some extremely difficult sessions in the legislature. We're hopeful and confident that Close can easily hone the additional, softer skills important to serve voters well in this office.

SIDEBAR:

Schopp for Metro Council District 3

Metro Council races are usually echo chambers for smart growth advocates, which is why we usually take a pass. This election, however, there's one race worth taking note of. Metro critic Steve Schopp, a Tualatin-based contractor who is active on land use issues, is challenging Carl Hosticka for Metro Council District 3.

Suffice to say it would be refreshing to have an alternative voice, *just one*, on the Metro Council. Schopp for Metro District 3.