

Bend Up Close: Chuck Burley

by K_Guice

A State Representative in Search of Solutions

When people ask Chuck Burley, State Representative (R-Bend) about living a politician's life he tells them that he doesn't consider himself to be a politician, but rather a public servant and problem solver.

Looking at Burley's history you will find helping people has always been a way of life for the Bend Resident. "I never thought of it, I just always did it," he said. "Someone's got to do it."

(L) State Representative Chuck Burley

That strong work ethic served him well in his first term as representative of House District 54, the city of Bend. During the 2005 session he was a member of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee, the Information Management and Technology Committee, and was vice-chair of the Transportation Committee.

He sponsored House Bill 2729 that created legislation that authorizes Community Forest Authorities to protect key forestland as working forests. As Central Oregon continues to boom, Burley, who has lived in Bend since 1993 says there has to be a balance.

"We have a vast array of recreational opportunities and we are blessed that we have a lot of areas around to do those things," he said.

However, Burley adds, "With more people moving into the area we are seeing large blocks of land bought out. Some are being turned into destination resorts and while there is room to do this, there are areas where we shouldn't be doing this." He said ultimately, the idea is to protect the thing that people like about the area.

Private forests across the country are being bought by developers and turned into lots for housing and resorts. It has a huge impact on the timber industry, effects hunting and fishing enthusiast and is blow to the ecosystem and wildlife.

"Crown Pacific went bankrupt and as part of that their land went to their creditors," said Burley. "The concern was; what are they going to do with all of that land?"

Under his new bill, local governments were able to create "Community Forest Authorities." Using

tax-exempt municipal bonds to buy private forestlands, the authorities would allow communities to keep working forests in production.

The authorities would manage the forests, which would remain as private property, and be overseen by boards that include local government, timber companies and environmental representatives.

That legislation has far reaching effects. The law can now be used as a tool to preserve timber jobs, wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities that so many central Oregonians appreciate about the region.

Burley is certainly no stranger to forestry. "I have two degrees in forest management," he said. "I am a Certified Forester."

Burley has twice been elected to Bend Metro Park and Recreation District Board of Directors in 1999 and

2003. He served on the Western Governors' Association National Fire Plan Team, Governor Kulongoski's Eastside Forest Advisory Committee, and the Western Governors' Associations Forest Health Advisory Committee.

In addition to giving of his time as a public servant, Burley has volunteered for a number of causes over the years. He has served his community through involvement in the Bend Metro Parks and Recreation district, Deschutes United Way, Rotary International and as a youth soccer coach and referee.

Currently, he volunteers with the Mt. Bachelor National Ski Patrol. "I got on the ski patrol in 1994," Burley said. "You patrol the mountain, you provide first aid; help people lost on the mountain, etc."

Volunteers work from November to April monitoring the mountain and are required to give six to eight full days within a two month time period. In addition, Burley takes on extra duties as a certified instructor teaching emergency care to other volunteers.

The days are long but Burley says they are rewarding. "At the end of the day you sweep all the runs," he said. "It's peaceful and it's a really nice way to end a long day."

Burley enjoys those calm times and it's likely the most quiet he finds in his recent day-to-day life. He is now running for his second term and looking to tackle some big issues, like education.

"Education is an ongoing issue in this state," said Burley. "We need find a way to create a more stable way to fund our education system. Not just \$12, but \$20."

Burley has always been a big supporter of public education. Both his children; Jessica, 24, and Chris, 22; attended public school. In addition, his wife of 28 years, Linda was a teacher. Currently, she is the assistant principal at a local Bend elementary school.

"Rep. Burley promised in 2004 to increase education funding, protect funds for seniors and the disabled, and help Bend's college students. He delivered for Bend and Oregon." Debie Griffith, Oregon State University Cascades Student said.

According to his website, VoteForBurley.com, he increased K-12 education funding over 8 percent. Burley created permanent funding for the Oregon Project Independence program for seniors and disabled and reduced the Governor's proposed tuition increases and provided funding for community colleges and state universities.

As for the future, Burley says he is looking forward to reviewing recommendations from the Chalkboard Project. It is an independent and non-partisan group that has commissioned deep and broad research in the key areas of school quality and funding. In addition, he plans to reintroduce a bill he co-sponsored that would increase capital for school construction in high growth areas.

“Our kids are our future,” Burley said. “If we don’t get them educated we are doing a big disservice to them and our own futures, in my mind.”

Burley says finding ways to help children thrive will only better the community, and that is what serving as an elective official is all about. "It's trying to solve problems. Whether it is a better education for children, health care or public transportation; it's a problem-solving process."

There is a true satisfaction for the legislator when he is able to help create solutions for his community. He says, "It's a lot of work and there are times you get a little frustrated, but the times you have successes make it all worth it."

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