

# The Sunday Oregonian

Editorials

Letters

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## Elect Gov. Vic Atiyeh to a second term

Neither Republican Gov. Vic Atiyeh, 59, nor Democratic state Sen. Ted Kulongoski, 41, offers to steer Oregon boldly in major new directions. Good. No money would be available to pay for such a trip.

Under any believable scenario of federal economic recovery, this state will be financially strapped, a poverty victim, for much of the next four years. So, the race for governor narrows to one central issue: Which candidate can be trusted to administer the state best on a shoestring budget? The answer, hands down, is Atiyeh.

Management of state institutions has

not been a major controversy between the candidates because a wide array of state workers and legislators of both parties agree Atiyeh has been a remarkably effective manager.

In 20 years of legislative experience, the governor amassed encyclopedic knowledge of government service delivery. He has coupled this with sound personnel instincts, developed as a successful businessman, to appoint, or retain from the administration of former Gov. Bob Straub, a cast of upper-level and middle managers who are exceptionally good policy-makers and administrators. Atiyeh assigns them a compass bearing and a course speed, then gets out of the way.

Atiyeh's management efficiencies have been particularly striking in the Department of Human Resources, a budget-gobbling agency that never has been run as well as under this administration.

Kulongoski has launched minor skirmishes

against the governor's management record, notably in the economic development field, but nothing that could be called a frontal assault, and certainly nothing that has breached Atiyeh's stronghold.

The incumbent and the challenger, in fact, agree on a great deal. Both strongly oppose Ballot Measure 3, the property tax limitation, and Measure 6, which would squelch statewide land use planning, because both measures would greatly complicate the next governor's principal task — positioning the state to take advantage of the recovery that eventually will come. Both oppose a sales tax but favor some sort of cap on residential property tax assessments.

They also differ on a great deal. Kulongoski, while building his campaign on an economic development platform, is inclined to solve many of the state's property tax complaints by shifting much of the load on to the income tax. He has limited awareness that managers of the businesses he wants to attract will not locate in a state that penalizes executives for their success. Atiyeh, by contrast, understands that an income tax bludgeon won't lure jobs to Oregon.

The contenders are miles apart on energy matters. Kulongoski has been anti-nuclear, pro-public utility, anti-regional bill, anti-private utility. His energy positions also are rooted in slow-growth or no-growth views that Oregon is a self-sufficient energy island. In fact, it is energy-poor and dependent on its neighbors. Atiyeh, by contrast, is a regionalist in energy matters, yet he is willing to vent steam toward the Bonneville Power Administration if Oregon's energy interests are neglected or ignored.

Kulongoski potentially would bring some strong attributes to the governorship. He is a stronger public speaker, more charismatic, perhaps a better public policy salesman than Atiyeh — characteristics that could be useful when the governor is asked to close a deal that would

bring a business to Oregon. Kulongoski has been a good, even superior, legislator, though this last session was not his best. Kulongoski could be expected to have an advantage in working with a legislative majority that is likely to be Democratic in both houses — though he concedes he would be unable to swing the two-thirds majority necessary for any tax plan if Measure 3 passes Nov. 2.

Kulongoski essentially asks Oregonians to trust that he will develop "a strategic plan" to lead the state out of the economic wilderness and that his vigor will be decisive in implementing the plan. The plan, however, is unformed, and it is difficult even to locate a major bone from which the skeletal outline might be imagined.

Atiyeh also makes few concrete promises. He essentially asks Oregonians to trust that his style of honesty, hard work and careful decision-making is just the prescription for the lean times ahead.

The Oregonian tries to judge candidates more by what they have shown they can do than by what they say they will do. The editors see far more legislative and managerial trophies on Atiyeh's shelf than on Kulongoski's. We trust the governor more than the challenger to manage the crises and challenges of the next four difficult years, even though Atiyeh's view of them is rosier than ours.

The Oregonian recommends that Gov. Vic Atiyeh be elected to a second term Nov. 2.

