WESTERN STATES STRATEGIES

Bigoted and Anti-Democracy Candidates: 2022 Races to Watch in the Northwest

1. Joe Kent, Candidate for U.S. Congress, Washington's 3rd Congressional District
    - A troubling hallmark of Joe Kent's campaign to date is his willingness to organize and participate in events with some of the region's most visible anti-democracy actors.
    - Despite attempting to denounce violence, during his campaign, Kent has been photographed with several people who have spent time in jail in recent years for political violence.
    - Kent has repeatedly used rhetoric that echoes white nationalist sentiment, such as calling Islamic culture "based on conquest at its core," and saying there's nothing wrong with "white people special interest" groups.
2. Ammon Bundy, Candidate for Governor, Idaho
    - Bundy is best known for his previous armed standoffs with the federal government, but the creation of his thousands-strong People's Rights group during the pandemic is of particular concern. The group specializes in very personal attacks, such as doxing.
    - A number of People's Rights leadership have been arrested for political violence in recent years and Bundy himself is facing a lawsuit stemming from a campaign against a Boise hospital that resulted in doxing, threats, and the hospital temporarily closing due to protests.
    - In the final months of Bundy's campaign, he has specifically targeted Idaho's LGBTQ community. Bundy promised to "throw groomers in prison" if elected.
3. Christine Drazan, Candidate for Governor, Oregon
    - Drazan is supported by a number of anti-democracy groups such as Timber Unity. An event in September promoted by the Drazan campaign featured BJ Soper, a longtime paramilitary leader in Oregon and ranking member of Ammon Bundy's People's Rights.
    - Drazan has previously failed to deny conspiracies that the 2020 election was stolen.
4. Sheriff Bob Songer, Candidate for Sheriff, Klickitat County, Washington (incumbent)
    - Songer describes himself as a "constitutional" sheriff, meaning he believes that sheriffs have the authority to not enforce laws that they deem unconstitutional. Songer has long been associated with the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA), a group run by Richard Mack, who was a founding board member of the Oath Keepers, a key organizer of the January 6 insurrection.
    - In the May press release, CSPOA listed five sheriffs who are "committed" to investigating allegations of voter fraud in their jurisdictions. One of the sheriffs listed was Bob Songer of Klickitat County, Washington. Songer has a long history of espousing rhetoric in-line with the CSPOA's beliefs.
    - In a recent interview, also with Mack, Songer called Black Lives Matter activists "terrorists" and claimed his opponents support drug trafficking.
5. Jo Rae Perkins, Candidate for U.S. Senate, Oregon
    - During a previous campaign, Perkins took a Qanon "pledge" and endorsed certain aspects of the dangerous conspiracy theory embraced by dozens of candidates for federal office both in 2020 and 2022.
    - In 2020, Perkins spoke at a rally organized by the far-right The American Patriot Society (TAPS). The rally appeared to be partially organized around the "Save the Children" cause, one co-opted by QAnon supporters. TAPS members include someone who spent time in prison for providing a gun to a felon who used it for a string of murders, and a man who claimed Democrats should be shot dead in the streets for allowing child trafficking to occur on their watch – a key aspect of the Q conspiracy.

6. Jim Marchant, Candidate for Secretary of State, Nevada
    - Marchant is one of several Secretary of State candidates who have promoted the "Big Lie." At a recent rally he stated, "When I'm secretary of state of Nevada, we are going to fix it, and when my coalition of secretary of state candidates around the country get elected, we're going to fix the whole country, and President Trump is going to be president again in 2024."
    - Marchant previously claimed that a key QAnon activist, Juan O. Savin, helped recruit him to run for Secretary of State. Marchant has spoken at QAnon conferences in the past.
7. Michele Fiore, Candidate for State Treasurer, Nevada
    - In 2015, Fiore told a radio station: "What, are you kidding me? I'm about to fly to Paris and shoot 'em in the head myself. I am not OK with Syrian refugees. I'm not OK with terrorists. I'm OK with putting them down, blacking them out, just put a piece of brass in their ocular cavity and end their miserable life. I'm good with that." She later claimed she was not talking specifically about shooting Syrian refugees.
    - Fiore has openly supported the Bundy family in their armed standoffs with the federal government. Fiore was one of the key elected officials involved with the Coalition of Western States (COWS), organized by disgraced former WA State Representative Matt Shea. Fiore previously said of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), "The BLM has become a bureaucratic agency of – basically – terrorism. So at what point do we band together as elected officials, and say, 'Enough is enough of the BLM?' Can we divert this conversation? At what point are we going to actually do something for our citizens?"
    - Following the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, Fiore blamed transgender medicine for the shooters actions and said these medicines, not assault weapons, should be banned.
8. Ben Edtl, Candidate for State Senator, Oregon's 19th State Senate District
    - Endorsed by several anti-democracy groups including Oregonians for Medical Freedom and the Oregon Firearms Federation.
    - Former founder and president of anti-mask group Free Oregon.
    - Joined fellow anti-democracy candidate Marc Thielman for a class action lawsuit claiming unfounded widespread voter fraud in Oregon funded by his group Free Oregon.
9. Sheriff Jim Raymond, Candidate for Sheriff, Franklin County, Washington (incumbent)
    - Has identified with the "constitutional sheriff" movement, and has twice issued statements that he would not enforce laws which passed in his county or state, once in regards to guns and later to COVID-19 restrictions.
    - During an arbitration about employee access to unions was quoted saying, "corrections deputies squealing to their Union Rep is coming to an end."
    - Said in a public Facebook post, "Do you really think, I care about your questionable communistic face book community values? Folks this country and more pointed this State, is becoming a socialist-police state more rapidly then you realize. We just sit back and allow it to go on at a State level (representatives and legislators) and (senators and Congressman) at a federal level. Be it illness issues, laws being changed to protect the criminal predator's in our communities or just generally handing over your liberties because..... 'lets all just get along.'"
10. Adam Laxalt, Candidate for U.S. Senate, Nevada
    - According to the LA Times' Mark Z. Barabak, "Laxalt led efforts to overturn Biden's 2020 victory in the state, filing a batch of groundless lawsuits, pushing phony claims of voter fraud and sowing unwarranted doubts about the integrity of balloting"
    - Laxalt's campaign ads are routinely anti-immigrant in nature, attacking the undocumented, and recruiting the Border Patrol Union president, who has a history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, to campaign on his behalf.
    - Recent reporting revealed Laxalt has paid a campaign consultant with a history of antisemitic social media posts.
11. Rob Chase, Candidate for State Representative, Washington's 4th District (incumbent)

- Chase, who replaced former State Rep. Matt Shea in the legislature, has openly promoted the dangerous QAnon conspiracy theory that many on the far-right espouse.
- Chase has also promoted a number of other conspiracy theories, including that 9/11 was an "inside job."
- After being elected in 2020, Chase hired a former Spokane County GOP chairwoman who resigned after defending white nationalist James Allsup.

12. Robert Sutherland, Candidate for State Representative, Washington's 39th District (incumbent)
    - Sutherland is a strong ally of paramilitary groups in Washington, in particular Washington 3%, a group with a history of violent rhetoric and actions including seeking to perform a citizen's arrest on WA Attorney General Bob Ferguson.
    - In 2020, when Black Lives Matter rallies around the country triggered paramilitary groups to mobilize dozens of counterdemonstrations claiming to "keep the peace," Sutherland joined with armed figures to "patrol" the town of Snohomish, WA. Sutherland wrote on social media that he and other armed men were "defending" the town from "rioting and looting by Antifa thugs."

Also, noteworthy:

- Cliff Bentz, Candidate for U.S. Congress, Oregon's 2nd Congressional District (incumbent)
    - Despite his May 2021 vote in favor of creating an independent commission to investigate the January 6 attacks, Bentz's earlier vote to overturn the 2020 election and support of Marjorie Taylor Greene are troubling.
    - Bentz was one of the Oregon State Senators who went into hiding in order to scupper cap-and-trade legislation. This was widely endorsed by anti-democracy groups such as Timber Unity.
- Jim Walsh, Candidate for State Representative, Washington's 19th District (incumbent)
    - Walsh is a strong ally of paramilitary groups in Washington, in particular Washington 3%, a group with a history of violent rhetoric and actions including seeking to perform a citizen's arrest on WA Attorney General Bob Ferguson. Walsh spoke at a rally organized with the help of WA 3%'s in Olympia in March of 2022.