

This is Charlie Berman speaking to you from KPTZ FM's brand-spanking new Fort Worden State Park studios in Port Townsend, Washington. It's Wednesday, May 1, 2024, and I'm bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon*.

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Democracy is in motion next week, as candidates will file for elected offices from the Governor to the PUD commissioner. And while statewide contests draw the most attention, our local officials have a greater effect on our lives. Candidates can file in person at the auditor's office in the Courthouse from 8am to 5pm Monday, May 6 to Friday, May 10. Filing is also available online. The link is <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/candidates/filing-resources/file-office>. Those filing will appear on the August 6 primary, with the top two prevailing candidates advancing to the November 5 general election regardless of party.

At this writing, two open seats on the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners have drawn one candidate each: District 2 Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour is seeking a second term, while local entrepreneur Heather Dudley-Nollette is hoping to succeed Kate Dean, who opted out of a third term. Both unopposed candidates are Democrats.

State legislative races are mostly contested. The open 24th District State Senate race is locked in, between State Representative Mike Chapman, a Democrat and Republican Quilcene Fire Commissioner Marcia Kelbon. In the lower house, the District 1 Representative seat is the most contested, with three Democrats and one Republican. This is the only local race likely to force a primary contest. Predictions are that the Republican will make the cut, with the Democrats battling it out for the second slot. It is not uncommon for candidates to file at the last minute in order to provide voters a choice, but such candidates seem to be less committed to public service than those announcing their campaign in advance.

One of the most consequential statewide races is for Public Lands Commissioner. The top three candidates for the position are Democrats Kevin Van De Wege, a state senator, and King County Council Chair Dave Upthegrove. Also running is former US Representative Jamie Herrera Buetler, a Republican. Of these, Upthegrove is the only one who is not taking money from timber companies – the interests that the department is tasked with regulating. He has raised the most money of all the candidates with more than \$330,000, according to the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission.

Upthegrove told the *Beacon* that much of his support comes from the Olympic Peninsula. He said that residents care about issues impacting forests and public lands. He added that he feels at home amongst our local environmentalism and claims that he has found “my people” out here on the Peninsula. If elected, Upthegrove said that he will enact a policy that ends the destruction of mature legacy forests – those areas that have never been logged by a machine. While they don’t quite qualify under the state’s old growth status, they are still some of the most complex and biodiverse regions of the state. Protected Olympic National Park lands are surrounded by many currently unprotected legacy forests, including those around vital watersheds like the Elwha River. Although the Department of Natural Resources recently protected 69 acres in the Elwha Watershed, 850 acres of legacy forest are still at high risk. Upthegrove believes that implementing these protections is possible without hurting the local economy.

As with many other races, the strongest Republican candidate – in this case, Herrera Buetler – will most likely advance to the general election along with one of the Democrats. Herrera Buetler, incidentally, lost her congressional seat after she voted in favor of Donald Trump’s second impeachment.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. You can submit ideas to The *Beacon* through [info@jeffcobeacon.com](mailto:info@jeffcobeacon.com). This is Charlie Berman. Thanks for listening.