

WARNING

MIKE NEARMAN IS DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH



Mike Nearman wants to be our state representative—
but that's a dangerous proposition for our health. Why?
Because he thinks insurance companies should be able
to deny you coverage due to pre-existing conditions*.

Mike Nearman even compared people with pre-existing
conditions to junk cars* and would force you to buy your
insurance from government-run high risk pools—costing
you thousands of dollars more for your coverage!

- ▶ Get cancer?
No insurance for you!
- ▶ Have a heart attack?
Too bad, so sad!
- ▶ Asthma?
Coverage denied!

COVERAGE DENIED

With views like that he's the last thing we need as our state representative.

MIKE NEARMAN IS BAD FOR OUR HEALTH!

No New Comment from Nearman

Nearman would not respond to questions for this article, but in an earlier interview, he staked out positions on healthcare very far to the right on the political spectrum, opposing even popular regulations that require insurers to cover preventive care like colon screenings as well as those that force them to cover people with pre-existing conditions, comparing that practice to forcing auto insurers to cover jalopies.

He later denied the unfavorable comparison of sick people to junk cars after Thompson used the remark in his campaign literature.

Business, labor and healthcare interests spent heavily in support of Thompson during the primary, but one significant corporate donor -- Regence BlueCross BlueShield -- has signed onto Nearman's campaign, handing him \$1,000.

Thompson said if organized labor gets involved for Davis, it could be the game-changer.

"Nearman is so stridently anti-public union, she has a chance to raise some money," he said. "SEIU has the money."

Traditionally a big spender, the Service Employees International Union has held back so far in the general election campaign, supporting about a dozen Democrats with checks of just a few hundred dollars each. Davis is a member of SEIU Local 503 and said she is working for their political support as well as the other large public employee union, AFSCME.

Labor unions are not going to support Nearman, who has campaigned to privatize some government services to cut labor costs, but the gamble is deciding which campaigns would be the wisest investment, and whether Davis' campaign makes the cut.

Thompson Tries to Survive Strong Challenge from the Right

Rep. Jim Thompson is among the most influential Republicans on healthcare issues, serving as the vice-chair of the House Health Care Committee. But his support for same-sex marriage and his compromising demeanor on healthcare reforms has forced him to defend his Dallas-based House district against a conservative eager to take a more provocative approach to politics.

Christopher David Gray

Mike Nearman wants to take the Oregon Republican Party in a new direction, one along Tea Party lines and rid the party of so-called "Republicans In Name Only" that hold sway in the Oregon House. He wants to start with Rep. Jim Thompson, R-Dallas, whom he believes hasn't done enough to derail the hated Obamacare laws.

"He's content to just get spoon fed whatever Cover Oregon wants," said Nearman, an information technology professional and the chairman of the Polk County Republicans. "I wouldn't let John Kitzhaber get away without answering any questions."

Worse, he thinks Thompson has betrayed his party's principles on bedrock social issues like gay marriage. Thompson is one of three Republican legislators to publicly support same-sex marriage, sparking Nearman to run against him in House District 23, which Thompson has held since 2009.

Thompson, the go-to guy on healthcare issues among Republicans, is known for his soft power and negotiation skills as vice-chairman of the House Health Care Committee, shaping legislation from the minority even if he lacks the ability to set the agenda.

"He's a solid knowledge base in our caucus on healthcare issues," said Rep. Julie Parrish, a moderate Republican from West Linn. "It takes a lot to get ramped up and prepared on the issues. Losing Jim would be detrimental to our party."

Nearman would take a decidedly different approach to healthcare policy. Where Thompson works toward compromise, Nearman opposes nearly any healthcare policy that has the patina of Democratic support.

He opposes the coordinated care organizations and Gov. John Kitzhaber's attempts to reform the Medicaid system:

"Salem Hospital's not really happy about it. That's who I take my cue from."

He opposes nearly every aspect of the national healthcare reform as well, including the Medicaid expansion, "You get hooked on candy and then three years later get cut off," to the new insurance regulations, including the law that requires insurance companies to offer



colorectal exams at no extra charge, "It doesn't pencil-out costwise" -- and the law that prohibits insurance companies from turning away customers due to so-called "pre-existing conditions":

"That makes it not insurance. That's making it redistribution of wealth," Nearman said comparing such policies to forcing auto insurers to cover junk cars.

Prior to the Affordable Care Act, **as many as one-quarter** of Oregonians could be regularly denied regular health insurance on the individual market for conditions **such as acne** and asthma as well as serious illnesses such as cancer or heart disease. Such people had the choice of paying thousands of dollars more in the high-risk Oregon Medical Insurance Program or going without insurance.

Polk County Tea Party

Nearman is an upstart who in recent years has led a hostile takeover of the Polk County Republican Party, removing the old guard such as Thompson's wife, Helga.

"I beat his wife for the county chair. I beat him on the public safety levy. I'm going for number 3 here," said Nearman.

Last year, Nearman was the sole Republican official to oppose a property tax levy to support the county sheriff, which resulted in Polk County reducing its patrol hours to half-days in March.

Nearman thinks the county could restore patrols and make up its budget by privatizing the county jail, while Thompson worries that Polk County could end up like Josephine County, where a woman was raped after no one was able to respond to an emergency call of an abusive ex-boyfriend beating down her door.

Thompson is standing firm in his view that people should be able to marry someone of either sex, and he's particularly irked that Oregon Right to Life has thrown their support to his opponent.

"How many gay and lesbian couples have abortions?" asks Thompson, who retains his staunch anti-abortion views despite a more liberal view of marriage. "I'm a Christian. I don't believe in the anti-gay-marriage movement. There are churches that don't."

He traced his support for same-sex marriage to the Equal Protection Clause in the U.S. Constitution, and said if Republicans don't get out of the way, the courts will decide against them anyway. "It's also just the right thing to do."

Thompson hasn't supported "Obamacare" so much as worked within the political minority to negotiate its terms, convinced full well that there was no way he could stop Gov. John Kitzhaber, a medical doctor, from implementing the Affordable Care Act in Oregon.

"I'm supposed to be throwing bombs on the House floor and pontificating about Obamacare as if Obama or anyone else cares what I say about healthcare," Thompson quips.

The ranking Republican on the House Health Care Committee has been able to negotiate closely with Health Chairman Rep. Mitch Greenlick, D-Portland, on a raft of issues, including the national health law, and wielded the most power as co-chair of the committee with

Greenlick in 2011 and 2012. Thompson in particular takes credit for one of the saving graces of Cover Oregon -- the ability for consumers to get free assistance from an insurance agents, who receive a commission from the exchange:

"He and I sit down and discuss a lot of bills," Thompson said of Greenlick. "Most impactfully? He fought me tooth and nail to let insurance agents get in on Cover Oregon."

Thompson is not so much moderate as idiosyncratic and actually takes some fairly conservative positions. If he had his way, he wouldn't have taken the federal money to expand Medicaid to cover 200,000 more low-income Oregonians, saying this population is overwhelming a strapped system.

The Dallas lawmaker has pushed for legislation to increase healthcare access by expanding the scope of practice for less-pedigreed healthcare workers, including nurse practitioners and pharmacists. Thompson is the former executive director of the Oregon State Pharmacy Association.

Statewide Right-Wing Push

Thompson's race is one of several Republican primaries pitting more ideologically conservative candidates against traditional or moderate Republicans.

Across the river from Polk County, the Marion County GOP chairman David Darnell is battling Rep. Vic Gilliam of Silverton, who sponsored a bill to give special driver licenses to people who cannot prove citizenship. That law is on hold after opponents gathered enough signatures for a ballot referendum this fall.

Nearman said he's friends with Darnell but denies any coordination with his campaign or any direct recruitment from Oregon Republican Party Chairman Art Robinson, which Thompson alleges.

The millionaire Nevada businessman Loren Parks, famous for bankrolling the referendum campaigns of political gadfly Bill Sizemore, is spending \$75,000 on Darnell's campaign to get Gilliam out of office.

In eastern Oregon, Parks has dumped \$30,000 into the campaign of Greg Baretto to challenge John Turner, the hand-picked successor to moderate Rep. Bob Jenson for his Pendleton seat. Jenson faced his own challenge from conservative party leaders in Western Oregon when they sent **busloads of tea party activists** across the Cascades to canvass against him in 2010. Jenson clung to his seat by 200 votes and served another four years.

Nearman hasn't reported any of the big money of the other conservative challengers, at least not yet. His records show just \$1,600, largely through small donations, but Thompson said he has 30 days to report his finances and clearly has more serious campaign money, evidenced by his campaign signs and handbills.

Thompson has the backing of the business community and many healthcare interests -- state campaign finance records show he's reported \$43,000 since his last election. His top supporter is Nike, which gave \$6,000. The Oregon Hospital Political Action Committee has given him \$3,000 while he has received \$2,000 each from the restaurant lobby and a PAC of optometrists. The Oregon Nurses Association and the pharmacists' lobby gave Thompson

\$1,500 each.

Other health care interests supporting Thompson financially include the health underwriters -- an insurance agent group, with \$1,000; Pfizer, \$1,000; CVS Caremark, \$1,000; Genentech, \$1,000; the chiropractors' lobby, \$1,000; the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, \$1,000; AstraZeneca, \$750; and Regence BlueCross Blue Shield, \$500.

If Nearman has any advantage for the May 20 primary election, it's with the rural, heavily Republican makeup of the district, which sprawls across most of the west side of the Willamette Valley, stretching from Yamhill County down to the Lane County line, while cutting out the bigger towns like Salem, Corvallis and Albany. The largest community in the district is Thompson's hometown of Dallas; Nearman lives in the country outside Independence.

A Democrat would not have much chance winning the seat, so Republican primary voters, a group dominated by conservatives, effectively get to pick the representative without a vote from independents or Democrats.

But Thompson maintains a broader view of the kind of Republican who would be the most effective for his constituents.

"If the party runs far to the right, they'll lose the business community," Thompson says. "We need to have the discussion of whether the far right runs the party or if we do."

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