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Election 2026: Incumbent Marsh up against Krigsvold for Oregon House District 5 seat

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Incumbent Democrat Pam Marsh, at left, is seeking a sixth term representing Oregon House District 5. She faces Republican newcomer Alexander Krigsvold. Both are from Ashland.

Ashland Democrat would focus on wildfire, higher education, housing and homelessness; newcomer Republican said he hopes to bring moderate mindset, budget accountability to Salem

Incumbent Democrat Pam Marsh is running for a sixth term in the Oregon House of Representatives for District 5 against newcomer and Republican Alexander Krigsvold. Both are Ashland residents.

Before serving in the state Legislature, Marsh served as executive director of the Ashland Emergency Food Bank from 2012 to 2016, manager of the Green Springs Inn from 2014 to 2023; deputy director of OnTrack, a nonprofit in Medford from 2006 to 2012, and as an Ashland City Councilor (2012-2016) and Planning Commissioner (2006-2012). She is also a mother of four.

Marsh said her focus for the 2027 session, if elected, is on wildfire prevention and mitigation, higher education and housing and homelessness in the coming sessions if elected to a sixth term. She currently chairs the Housing and Homelessness Committee. She also shared concerns about healthcare going into the 2027 legislative session.

'200,000 Oregonians could fall off the Medicaid program'

Marsh also shared her thoughts on healthcare leading up to the 2027 Legislative session and the importance of holding the Medicaid system together in light of HR 1 at the federal level.

"We're looking at a $422 million gap for Medicaid," Marsh said. "We are also looking at the requirements right now requiring people to re-enroll on a regular basis and Medicaid requiring them to document that they're working or volunteering.

"We're expecting about 200,000 Oregonians to fall off the Medicaid program/the OHP program and then the question is how do we provide basic services for those people."

She anticipates many of the individuals cut from Medicaid will end up in a local emergency room, as is the trend for those without health insurance.

Marsh anticipates legislation in the next session affecting hospital policies.

“Asante will be watching those carefully — so will I,” Marsh said.

“How Asante acts with the community is something I’m very concerned about, but it’s probably mostly outside of legislation itself.”

Marsh said she continues to stay engaged with current events surrounding Asante.

In particular, Marsh is concerned about the firing of neonatologists from Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center and is trying to figure out how the community can feel more confident in the hospital’s neonatal care.

“Right now, it’s really difficult to tell what is going on inside the hospital,” Marsh said. “It’s a very alarming situation and I think the community needs to continue to really pay close attention.”

Marsh said one of the accomplishments she’s most proud of is being part of passing The Power Act, which requires data centers to pay all of the costs of electricity that’s being provided to them.

She believes the legislation shows that Oregon can act to control the influx of data centers coming into the state from having an impact on residents.

“It was kind of groundbreaking,” Marsh said.

“Our job as a legislature is to go into the ’27 session with a really good package … to make sure that data centers’ environmental impacts are corralled and that we’ve set a path for data centers to actually be good partners in the community. It will require transparency around the impacts that they have, any kind of tax breaks that they are getting. It will require us to look carefully at tax breaks and make sure that we still want to provide those.

“I’m working on a couple of bills right now to address data centers and affordability,” she added.

“One of them would set a pathway for a data center to invest in the local power grid, including an energy efficiency investment, as a way of essentially creating surplus energy on the grid that can be used by data centers and at the same time, investing in community.”

Marsh also touted work in developing senior housing and working with Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek through a joint working group to set up a shelter program, with HB 3644 passing in 2025.

“In ’25, we passed a shelter structure that ensured that the state has an ongoing role in providing support for the shelter system and that was a major step forward because really, before a few years ago, the state was doing very little to support homelessness policies in local communities,” Marsh said in a phone call with Ashland.news.

“The aim in the ’27 session is going to be to maintain the funding that’s going to the shelter system.”

During a recent legislative informational hearing, she and others heard about a variety of communities throughout Oregon seeing a shift in homelessness numbers. She sees a shift in Jackson County, too.

“We are starting to see progress made on getting people off the street, through the shelter system and into permanent housing of some kind so that investments are paying off,” Marsh said. “We have to keep up the investment so that we don’t backslide.”

When asked about the safety of the “night lawn,” an area near Ashland Police Station designated for overnight camping by the city of Ashland, Marsh deferred to the city.

“The city has to figure out how to manage specifics that are happening within its system,” Marsh said. “What we do at the state level is set policy … try to get resources to cities so they have some kind of support for taking care of people, and then communities get to decide how they engage in that.”

“I’m unclear as to whether the city needs more funding (for homelessness),” she added, “nor how they would use it.

“The state did give the city money for 2200 Ashland St., and then it became clear after that grant had been made that the city was really not ready to take on the kind of sheltering responsibility that had been anticipated with that money … I’m not the person to second-guess how the city handles its issues, so again, if the city can be a partner, we’ll be a partner, but we are basically going to be working very hard just to maintain funding. I don’t expect that we’re going to have more dollars to expand the system or services.”

Wildfire mitigation/prevention

Six years after the Almeda Fire ravaged Talent, Phoenix and nearby south Medford, Marsh is quick to remind voters that recovery is not done.

“We’re probably about 90% as far as we’re going to get, but we are still trying to identify people who need help getting back into homes,” Marsh said.

A Jackson County Housing Authority housing development is planned for Highway 99 just outside of Phoenix, Marsh said, though the number of units and expected time of completion was unavailable at the time of publication.

“We have learned many lessons out of the Almeda Fire and one of them is a reinforcement of how devastating these events are, which means … we have to really double down on the prevention and the mitigation so that we do not put communities through this kind of devastation.”

Marsh said that wildfire mitigation and prevention work that’s been done the last few years, including during the 2025 session, have ensured that pieces are in place as the Legislature looks ahead to the 2027 session.

“We’ve just had a fire season where we had 2.5 million acres of forest … or landscape burn, I think we have to start doing that work on an elevated basis,” Marsh said.

“We have to figure out how to mesh funding that goes to forests with funding that goes to stabilized, adjacent neighborhoods so that we’re really having as big of impact with the investment of those dollars.

“I’m trying to talk to partners and figure out what a scaled-up mitigation program might look like. That’s a little bit of a work-in-progress at the moment, but we’re having lots of conversations and we’re also figuring out how the insurance industry can be involved in that conversation.”

Marsh wants to ensure that wildfire mitigation funding being invested by major utilities is being used as effectively as possible.

“They are making huge investments that are driving up our bills for those of us that get power from PPE or Pacificorp,” Marsh said. “To the extent that they’re investing that money we need to make sure that they’re really taking on projects that have the most bang for their buck.”

Higher education

Marsh was a chief sponsor of Oregon HB 4124, which calls on the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to develop an analysis and recommendations on the public post secondary system in Oregon. The legislation will require the HECC to develop recommendations to the legislature on design, implementation, operation of a sustainable system by April 1, 2027.

“In February the university realized they were realized they were actually $15 million in the hole so a lot of our attention moved in the short session to just trying to get the state to provide a backstop so that we knew the campus would be stable for the next year or year and a half,” Marsh said.

The legislation passed aims to make the higher education system in Oregon more stable for years to come, Marsh said.

“There are just so many arrows pointed at higher ed, it’s not just SOU, it’s the system as a whole,” Marsh said.

“I have a couple of bills that are drafted that are waiting for content on what the recommendations of the study are,” Marsh said.

In the meantime, she believes SOU is doing excellent work trying to restructure the campus and its offerings.

She believes SOU is doing everything within its power to move the needle, thus prompting state action to ensure SOU and RCC thrive.

“I support and applaud the work, but we also know if we don’t make system changes down the road, it’s going to continue to be very hard for many of our institutions to thrive,” she said.

“We’re really waiting to see what’s recommended. … I hope we get very bold recommendations from the (HB) 4124 process because I think this is our opportunity to make some fundamental shifts that could be lifesaving for the institutions.”

Marsh is hoping that HB 4124 leads to a more integrated partnership between SOU and Rogue Community College, in light of the competition for students that universities and community colleges are experiencing.

She noted that both SOU and RCC are competing for the same “pot of money” when it comes to state funding in addition to some of the same students.

“That will continue until we figure out how to meld the programs,” Marsh said.

“But the institutions and the state are going to have to step up to that.”

Krigsvold hopes to bring moderate mindset, budget accountability to Salem

Alexander Krigsvold, a political newcomer and Republican, has lived in Ashland for about eight years. He describes himself as a “moderate,” and hopes to bring a “meet-in-the-middle” ideology to Salem if elected.

Krigsvold is a native of North Pole, Alaska, and served as a crew chief in the U.S. Air Force from 1998 to 2001, stationed in New Mexico. He holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration, and studied journalism prior to his current role as regional manager of operations for quality at Harry & David, owned by 1-800-FLOWERS, in Medford.

“Two weeks after I announced my candidacy, my grandma died, so unfortunately the majority of my campaign funds ended up going to a couple separate trips,” Krigsvold told Ashland.news via phone. “I wasn’t able to throw the full weight that I wanted to in this campaign.”

But the unfortunate loss of his grandmother didn’t stop him from continuing his self-funded campaign.

Since his time studying and practicing journalism, Krigsvold has always been interested in politics and civic engagement. With three of his four children now grown and out of the house, more of his time was freed up to run for political office and he is running for the District No. 5 state representative seat to benefit more people.

“The state level is probably one of the best ways that I can use my resources,” Krigsvold said.

“I try to do the most good for the most amount of people.”

His aim is to insert more quality assurance into state government, and look into long-term solutions for addressing addiction recovery and treatment, homelessness and illegal grow operations in southern Oregon.

“I just think if we have someone in (government) that has a quality mindset where we try to understand the problem, look at the data that we have and base our solutions off actual data-driven results, then I think our governing would work better,” Krigsvold said.

He wants to take a look at the state's budget and look for waste and fraud.

"We look at the data that we have and then base our solutions off actual data-driven results, then I think our governing would work better rather than throwing money at problems," he said.

He is supportive of the state ensuring Southern Oregon University can maintain programs it needs for the region, but stopped short of support when it came down to providing $15 million in emergency funds as was the case this year.

"I don't feel that bailouts or excessive spending at the university level is appropriate," Krigsvold said. "They also have to manage their budget and they're seeing student declines, then they should be acting proactively instead of reactively to budget crises."

Krigsvold expressed opposition to raising taxes, though he said would consider all options to maintain state roads.

He also said he is against caps on rent for manufactured homes and/or rental housing and supports increasing the supply instead.

"I think the better way to do that is supply chain economics to work," Krigsvold said. "I think that we should use our legislative ability to reduce the requirements for what we need for housing or some of the local ordinances that make it prohibitive for housing, especially starter homes.

"The more supply we have, the less the cost is," he added.

When asked whether Krigsvold, a Republican, aligns with the policies of President Donald Trump, Krigsvold said he doesn't toe the party line.

"I feel overall, I think he's trying to do what's right for the country," Krigsvold said. "Some ways that he goes about it, I definitely don't agree with."

He sees each topic individually, such as reproductive rights, and not just as whether an issue aligns with Trump's policies.

Krigsvold supports pro-choice options when it comes to abortion, though he feels personally opposed to abortion.

"I believe in the sanctity of life and I believe that all life is sacred," Krigsvold said. "On the other hand, I 100% believe in self autonomy to your personal body."

He shared he is against caps on rent for manufactured homes or rental housing.

Krigsvold does not support sanctuary cities, but does express support for ICE.

He disagrees with some ways that the federal agency has handled detentions, in Minnesota specifically.

"I'm definitely not heartless," Krigsvold said. "You want to help everyone that's here.

"I also feel it's wrong to skip the line," he added.

He said he believes in the "rule of law" where if someone is here illegally, they "definitely shouldn't be here," he said.

"We need to change our immigration laws," he said. "We should stop talking about it and actually do it to make some immigration available."

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