Nurse to challenge Chapman for district state rep seat

By Paul Gottlieb
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PORT ANGELES — A licensed practical nurse who spearheaded the successful drive against an affordable housing initiative in Jefferson County last November announced her candidacy Tuesday for the 24th District legislative seat held by Port Angeles Democrat Mike Chapman.

Port Townsend Republican Jodi Wilke said Monday she opposes the one-term Democratic incumbent’s yes vote on using the rainy-day surplus to pay for education and for property tax relief.

Wilke, 58, also is against additional gun regulations on assault-style rifles and bump stocks, a rifle-firepower accessory, and says the
state Department of Natural Resources has overstepped its authority on rules setting aside marbled murrelet habitat, claiming the state Legislature should have more say in setting policy.

Wilke, a nurse who commutes to Messenger House Care Center on Bainbridge Island, kicks off her campaign today in events at 9 a.m. in Port Angeles at Joshua’s restaurant, 113 S. Del Guzzi Drive; noon–1 p.m. in Port Hadlock at the Valley Tavern, 21 Chimacum Road; and 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Hoquiam in Grays Harbor County at The Jitter House, 617 Simpson Ave.

The 24th District includes about 100,000 voters, three-quarters of whom live in Clallam and Jefferson counties, with the remainder in the northern half of Grays Harbor County.

A Minneapolis, Minn., native and Port Townsend resident since 2013, Wilke has two grown sons, has never held elective office and has held a variety of jobs during her adult life that give her “a broad perspective,” she said.

Wilke grew up on Mercer Island, was principal owner of a Marysville–area construction company in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and designed change-management systems at U.S. Marine’s yacht manufacturing plant in Arlington, a company later purchased by Brunswick Corp.

She’s worked in restaurants as a waitress and was a mortgage loan officer in the mid-2000s before graduating from the nursing program at Skagit Valley College in Mount Vernon in 2012.
Wilke worked on Camano Island for the election of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012 and voted for Donald Trump in 2016.

“I wasn’t a fan of him, but I’m more of a fan now,” she said.

“He kind of grew on me, you might say.”

She moved from Camano Island to Port Townsend in 2013, where she became involved in the “No on Prop. 1” campaign, a role she emphasized in her campaign announcement.

Jefferson County voters defeated the property tax measure in the Nov. 7 election.

It would have provided funding for low and very low income households and cost the owner of a $362,000 home — Port Townsend’s median-priced abode, according to Zillow — $130 per year.

“It would have helped approximately 189 [households] and hurt thousands,” she said of the initiative.

No-growth policies have contributed to the housing crisis, Wilke said.

Wilke said rifles can already be modified enough to make state regulations on bump-stocks unnecessary.

“The problem with guns is more of a social problem,” she said.

“Some [gun] limitation for mental illness is very appropriate,” Wilke said.

“Although it is a slippery slope when you start putting evaluations into government’s hands for anything.

“People tend to abuse that power, and I think we have to be careful.”

Wilke added that there should be an option for teachers to be armed “if they are competent and trained and have current licensing.”
Wilke, who attended Chapman’s presentation Tuesday before the Port Angeles Business Association, said she disagreed with Chapman’s vote to exempt lawmakers from the statewide Public Records Act, a law vetoed by Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee.

“If they don’t want records to be public, then maybe decisions need to be made in a form that’s more conducive to private discussion and brainstorming,” she said.

The state Department of Natural Resources “should be maintained as a consulting entity,” Wilke added.

“I don’t think anyone wants to destroy habitat or cause a cute little bird to become extinct, but I think there has to be a balance, because there are a lot of people that are really suffering,” she said of closed-off logging areas.

Wilke also disagreed with Chapman’s recent vote to pass a $44.6 billion operating budget that focused on increased spending for education to fulfill the state Supreme Court’s mandate contained in what’s known as the McCleary ruling.

The budget included a one-time, 30-cents-per-$1,000-valuation property tax cut funded by redirecting tax revenue that would have gone into the state Budget Stabilization Account, also known as the rainy day fund, criticized by Republicans for taking $700 million that might be needed if the economy goes sour.

The reserves also are being redirected into an account for education.

Wilke said she was “in a corner” on how McCleary should be funded.

“Nobody had a good answer for that one, so we ended up with a bad answer,” Wilke said.

Taxes could be lowered, “but they have to find where they are going to get that money if they are going to take them down,” she said.

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