

## In a Tough Fight, Kitzhaber Launches Air Offensive

Written by H. Bruce Miller  
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After letting Chris Dudley have the airwaves to himself since the June primary, John Kitzhaber has rolled out [his first TV ad](#) .

Unlike Dudley's ads, in which other people do most of the talking, the only voice heard in Kitzhaber's 60-second spot is that of the former governor himself, speaking about how he's going to bring jobs back to Oregon.

"This isn't about being a Republican, or being a Democrat, or being an independent," he begins, "it's about being an Oregonian. I have a great love for this state. I was raised here ... had amazing opportunities."

Oregonian political blogger [Jeff Mapes](#) comments: "Hint to voters: Dudley didn't grow up in Oregon."

Acknowledging that the state has an unemployment rate somewhere north of 10%, Kitzhaber goes on to say that "it doesn't have to be that way. But we can't move beyond that by continuing to cling to the past. We've got to start reaching for the future."

Mapes's analysis: "This is an attempt to address one of the big criticisms leveled by Dudley: that Kitzhaber, as a former governor, represents the failures of the past."

On his campaign website Kitzhaber gets in what appears to be another dig at Dudley and the Republicans, who [chided him earlier this week](#) for not making many personal appearances around the state: "I grew up here and I know where we've been and where we need to go as a state to create a better future for our children. The passion and knowledge I have isn't something you can get from just shaking hands as you're running for office."

The Kitzhaber ad, which is airing statewide on both network and cable channels, didn't come any too soon: A new [Survey USA poll](#) released earlier this week shows him and Dudley in a virtual dead heat – Dudley 46% and Kitzhaber 44%, with a margin of error of 4.2 points.

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Predictably, Kitz's troops tried to put a positive spin on the news. "They've spent \$600,000 on advertising since the primary and [Dudley's] numbers have hardly budged," Kitzhaber campaign spokesperson Jillian Schoene told Mapes.

But from reading comments in the Oregon blogosphere, I'd say Democrats are really worried – and with reason. Dudley has raised more money than Kitzhaber, he's got some celebrity status from his years as a Portland Trail Blazer, and in a season when anti-politician and anti-government sentiment is running high his lack of experience in public office is as much an asset as a liability.

On top of that, there's some validity to the Republican's gripe that Kitzhaber hasn't connected personally with Oregonians. He's never been a particularly enthusiastic campaigner – once joking that he wished there was a way he could get elected without running. If he's going to pull off a victory in November he'll have to overcome his natural reluctance and get out there shaking hands and kissing babies.