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THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896



Wes Williams successfully takes on incumbent

■ Union County voters select longtime La Grande lawyer over governor-selected incumbent

By Max Denning
The Observer

Thirteen circuit court judges who were appointed by Gov. Kate Brown were up for reelection around Oregon this year. Many of them ran unopposed.

In only two circuit court judicial races, the governor-appointed judge was defeated. In Linn County, Judge Fay Stetz-Waters was defeated by Michael Wynhausen, a deputy district attorney. Closer to home, in the Union and Wallowa counties Circuit Court judge race, La Grande lawyer Wes Williams defeated incumbent Mona Williams.

While judicial races are non-partisan, if a position is vacated mid-term, the new judge is appointed by the governor, the state's most prominent political figure. Mona, a Republican, who was chosen by Gov. Brown in May, made the point that the Democratic governor had "crossed party lines to appoint me" at the Union County Candidates' Forum in October.

Partisan opinions were not absent from the contested races. Among the unprecedented number of letters to the editors submitted to The Observer by Mona's and Wes' followers, many called out the candidates' political affiliations.

The governor appointed Linn County's Stetz-Waters to the bench in October 2017. At the time of her appointment, Stetz-Waters was working as a civil rights investigator for Oregon State University. Her opponent, Wynhausen, received endorsements from a number of law enforcement and Republican political leaders in the county. He won by almost 17 percent.

Brown, who won reelection this month, received less than 30 percent of the vote in Linn County, while her challenger, Republican Knute Buehler, received more than 60 percent.

In Union and Wallowa counties, Mona received support from a number of prominent Republican lawmakers, such as Rep. Greg Barreto, and law enforcement organizations in both counties.

While Republicans dominated almost every election
See **Judge** / Page 5A

Local firefighters respond to CAMP FIRE

■ Firefighters from Union, Wallowa counties sent to California to aid in the state's deadliest fire in its history

By Martha Mendoza and Garance Burke
The Associated Press

Four firefighters from Union County and two from Wallowa County are now fighting against California's deadliest fire in its history.

Forty-two people are dead and at least 200 people are missing after the Camp Fire started in Northern California.

Union County Fire Defense Board Chief Larry Wooldridge said Tim Waggoner and JB Brock from the La Grande Rural Fire Department and Colby Thompson and Casey Martin from the North Powder Fire Department were sent to California, along with Dean Brown and Amanda McHattton from Wallowa County.

"They are at the Camp Fire outside of Chico," Wooldridge told The Observer on Tuesday.

He said the firefighters' assignments change every time they're out, and this time they are working on support operations. He added they were just getting off a 27-hour shift when he talked to them Tuesday morning.

Wooldridge said he wasn't surprised when he was asked for resources last Thursday.

"I started making calls that night," he said. "The crews left here on Friday about 2 p.m. and arrived at the base camp in Chico by 4 a.m."

Wooldridge said the local fire crews will likely work for a 16-day period in California.

"They're not expected back here until after Thanksgiving," Wooldridge said. "It's really a testament to these guys that they are leaving their families to help in this fire."

While the origins of the fire
See **Fire** / Page 5A



AP photo

California declared a state of emergency late last week, which brought in resources from outside the state to assist in the state's deadliest fire.

“They’re not expected back here until after Thanksgiving. It’s really a testament to these guys that they are leaving their families to help in this fire.”

— Union County Fire Chief Larry Wooldridge



A coroner searches for human remains in the rubble of a house burned by the fire in California.

AP Photo

Firefighters are battling three major wildfires in California. Here's a breakdown by the numbers as of Tuesday evening, according to Cal Fire and local officials.

Camp Fire

Location: Butte County
125,000 acres burned
30 percent contained
42 fatalities confirmed,
3 firefighters injured
228 people unaccounted for
7,177 structures destroyed, most of them residences
139 reports of "suspicious incidents," including 16 considered

looting, but no arrests

Woolsey Fire

Location: Los Angeles County, Ventura County
96,314 acres burned
35 percent contained
2 fatalities confirmed, 3 firefighters injured
Some 370 structures destroyed,
57,000 in danger

Hill Fire

Location: Ventura County
4,531 acres burned
90 percent contained
—CBS News

Choosing firefighters for strike team

Union County Fire Defense Board Chief Larry Wooldridge is the leader of the local strike team, which is called on when resources are needed for wildland fires throughout Oregon and the western side of the country.

Wooldridge said once he is called to provide local fire resources, he contacts the county's fire chiefs to see if there are any firefighters to spare.

"I wait to hear back from them to find out my next step," he said, adding there may not be enough resources available to send. "(This time) it was pretty slim in Union County. I extended the request to Baker, Umatilla and Wallowa counties."

Wooldridge said each chief determines who has the proper training to fight the fire and also must weigh

whether the department should risk not having that personnel in case there is a fire locally to respond to. "They're all volunteer fire departments, (and) they need to not make a huge impact on the daily response (at home)," Wooldridge said.

Additionally, the fire chief noted that while the most likely culprits of sparking a wildfire (such as high temperatures, low humidity and lightning) are reduced significantly in the colder season, that doesn't mean there won't be wildfires.

"It's windy and dry out (in Union County) now," Wooldridge said. "One of the biggest fires we had in (the La Grande Rural fire) district was in February. We can get a large fire out of (fire season)."

— Cherise Kaechele, The Observer

LHS to make Hall of Fame inductions

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Stars of La Grande High School's past and present will be cast into an everlasting spotlight Saturday.

The standouts will be recognized at the fourth annual La Grande Tiger Booster Hall of Fame Class of 2018 Induction Banquet, set to run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Gilbert Center at Eastern Oregon University.

Four individuals plus the 2001 LHS A Cappella Choir and the Collman family will be inducted into the LHS Hall of Fame — and educator and coach Joe Brogdon will be inducted to the LHS Wall of Fame, which recognizes staff members.

Joe Brogdon — educator at LHS

Brogdon was an educator at LHS from 1983 to 2008. He had many positions at LHS, including welding instructor, head librarian and operator of the LHS Learning Center. He received a Crystal Apple award for educational excellence in 2007. In addition, Brogdon served as an assistant track and field coach at LHS for 28 years.

As an assistant track coach, Brogdon helped Bob Heitstuman win the 1985 state pole vault title and Skyler MacDonald win the 2003 javelin title, for LHS.

He has been an assistant track coach at Eastern Oregon University since 2008, first coaching pole vaulters and now javelin throwers. Nine of the javelin throwers he coached at EOU have qualified for the national NAIA meet. The total includes Pancho Saldana, who won the 2017 NAIA men's title.

Following are those who will be inducted this year into the LHS Hall of Fame.

2001 LHS A Cappella Choir — Outstanding Team

The 58-member choir won the first of LHS's eight state titles in May 2001 at the LaSells Stewart Center at Oregon State University in Corvallis under the direction of Michael Frasier. The choir won the state title in its division after being awarded 336 points. LHS beat second-place Central High School of Independence by five points.

One judge wrote the choir's performances during the state competition "was nearly flawless," according to a story in the May 7, 2001, Observer.

The choir received high marks for things such as its tone quality and visual presentation.

"They looked like they were having fun and the

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
34 LOW
Mostly cloudy



Thursday
54/34
Partly sunny

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Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



FRIDAY

EOU BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEET

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