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# THE OBSERVER



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## Wes Williams prepares for new role



Max Denning / The Observer

Wes Williams finishes packing books into moving boxes in his office in the West-Jacobson Building on Elm Street. Williams estimated he moved 400 books into his new office at the Union County Courthouse.

■ After 22 years as a lawyer in La Grande, Williams becomes circuit court judge Monday

By Max Denning, The Observer

*Longtime La Grande lawyer Wes Williams has begun moving into his new office in the Union County Courthouse, and next week he will officially be sworn in as the circuit judge for Oregon's 10th Judicial District, which covers Union and Wallowa counties.*



Max Denning / The Observer

Wes Williams was elected to be the 10th Judicial District Circuit Court Judge in November. He will be sworn in Jan. 7.

After a six-month campaign challenging incumbent Judge Mona K. Williams, who was appointed by Gov. Kate Brown in May 2018, Wes came out victorious in November. Wes, who has been a lawyer in La Grande since 1996, won the election with 52.67 percent of the combined vote from both counties. Mona was one of two governor-appointed circuit court judges to lose their re-election bid. The other was in Linn County, where Judge Fay Stetz-Waters was defeated by Michael Wynhausen, a deputy district attorney.

Almost two months after election day and less than a week until he is sworn in, Wes has been busy. While his priority has been preparing to take his seat on the bench, he is also working on moving out of his office in the West-Jacobson Building on Elm Street. The office will not be unoccupied — Laura Eckstein, an attorney who opened her own practice in June 2018 and works as a municipal court judge in Elgin, is renting the space and is moving into the office today.

Over the past week, Wes has moved more than 400 books from his Elm Street office into both his home and his new office in the Union County Courthouse. Wes said more than 1,000 books will remain at his old office until he makes room for them at home. All of his necessary office furniture has already been moved to the courthouse. "Other than hanging some pictures on the wall, we are pretty much finished moving in," Wes said.

While less physically tiring than moving hundreds of books, Wes' more daunting task over the last two months has been preparing to begin his time as a judge. Lucky for Wes, his learning process will include a number of experienced mentors. Williams spent two days in December

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## Seminar teaches creative ways to minimize livestock loss to wolves

■ Halfway ranchers wants to share knowledge of proactively protecting livestock

Observer staff

HALFWAY — Pine Valley has typically been a very tranquil place to live. There is a lot of ranching there, and with ranching comes challenges. In April 2017, local ranches came face-to-face with one of those challenges. Wolves have returned to the valley and the surrounding area, and with wolves have come depredations. Calves and cows have been wounded and some have died.

Local ranchers Shella and Barry DelCurtos were in the middle of this depredation. They didn't know how to protect themselves, their livestock and ultimately their livelihood against this challenging predator. They struggled and stumbled along and got through the spring by trial and error. The DelCurtos knew they needed to find a way to better prepare themselves for the coming spring.

In September, Shella and Barry were offered that opportunity.

The organization Defenders of Wildlife was willing to send both of them to Tom Minor Basin near Gardner, Montana, where they attended the four-day Range Rider workshop, looking for answers. What they found was hope for the future, in the form of Hilary and Andrew Anderson, workshop leaders and co-founders of the Tom Miner Basin Range Rider Project.

The Andersons are third-generation cattle producers successfully ranching on the outskirts of Yellowstone National Park. The western boundary of their ranch is West Yellowstone Park, but wolves and grizzly bears know no boundaries. The family has been dealing with wolves for many years and has had significant success in reducing depredation.

During the four-day seminar, the DelCurtos learned about ranch/range management, low-stress cattle handling, wolf behavior and hunting habits, profitability, how to better utilize range riders, and proactive non-lethal tools and techniques.

Shella and Barry came away with a different outlook on the situation in which they and their fellow ranchers find themselves. As Shella put it, they "had hope for the future." The DelCurtos decided if the Andersons and their ranching neighbors could implement a plan and make it work, maybe the same could be done in Pine Valley.

"If the Andersons can survive among one of the largest populations of grizzly bears, and where wolves abound, then we can survive here in the panhandle of Baker County," Shella said. "We wanted to share the knowledge we found with our fellow ranchers (because) wolves are going to be an everyday way of life."

Plans were then set in motion to bring the Andersons to Oregon to teach local ranchers and interested parties.

In early November 2017, Shella approached United Community Partners, a Halfway-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation dedicated to community development.

"Shella presented the UCP board of directors with a detailed plan for bringing this seminar to the panhandle," UCP's secretary, Deanna Pennock, said. "Shella wanted to start fundraising right away, so the cost for workshop attendees could be kept very minimal. The only thing standing in her way was the fiscal sponsorship of an organization with

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## Oregon to update driver's license, ID card design

Observer staff

SALEM — The next time you renew your Oregon driver's license or identification card you may see a new design with new security features. DMV is rolling out a new card design starting this winter.

The beauty of the new cards isn't just skin deep. The enhanced colorful look is part of the new card's advanced security features, making it harder to alter or duplicate.

Your current driver license or ID card will remain valid until its expiration date, so you do not need to replace your card before that date. You also do not need to replace your card when you move within Oregon — you can file your new address online at OregonDMV.com.

This is the first major upgrade to the card technology in

Oregon since 2003. In addition to the new look and security features, the new card will provide a vertical layout for provisional driver license holders — drivers younger than 21 years old. This will make it easier to identify minors where age restrictions apply, such as the purchase of alcohol.

The new card will hold the same information as the current card, including name, address, issuance date and expiration date, as well as a small duplicate "ghost" image of the person's photo. Driver license and ID card fees will remain the same with the new card.

### New features

Among the new security features:

The card body is a durable plastic material made of a



Contributed photo

The new design will be vertical (not shown) for drivers not younger than 21.

polycarbonate blend.

Customer information is laser-etched in clear, highly defined lines.

The colors are printed in

tiny patterns that are difficult to see without magnification and difficult to duplicate.

The clear laminate covering

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### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



**Tonight**  
27 LOW  
Becoming cloudy



**Thursday**  
36/32  
Cloudy

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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

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