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Good day to our valued subscriber Charles Flattree of La Grande

Rally decries Trump, dark money

■ La Grande residents join national 'We the People' protest

By Dick Mason
The Observer

La Grande activists joined a chorus of voices across the United States Saturday protesting the policies of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and demanding accountability from politicians.

La Grande was one of more than 60 cities and communities where "We the People" rallies were conducted Saturday. The protests were part of a grassroots effort spearheaded by American activists and author Amy Siskind, president of The New Agenda, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. Cities rallies were conducted in included Washington, D.C., and Portland.

Those participating in the La Grande rally met outside the Washington Avenue field office of Republican Oregon U.S. Congressman Greg Walden. Some participants attached signs and messages about gun control, climate change and health care to the door of Walden's office before the rally started.

Tanya Anchors of La Grande was one of about four people who spoke at the event. She urged politicians to stop accepting money from the National Rifle Association and the pharmaceutical industry and instead listen more closely to the people.

"We the People are here to defend our democracy. Defending this democracy is not just for us, here and now. This is for all who have fought and died to defend it. For those who are still

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CLIMATE STRIKE

Protest part of global movement



Lexi Chamberlain/Courtesy Photo

Strike organizer Nicholas DuVernay (right) and sister Elise DuVernay (left) hold up signs they used during their march down 4th Street in protest of the current handling of the climate crisis. These, and other signs are a major part of the national climate strike.

■ Approximately 80 people gather in Max Square on Friday

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

On the morning of Sept. 20 La Grande was one of a thousand U.S. cities to participate in the Climate Strike walkout and protest created by the United Nations. The global event made its way to Northeast Oregon because of La Grande High School senior Nicholas DuVernay. Around 80 people of all ages gathered at Max Square at 8:30 a.m. to hear speakers and march down Fourth Street to bring awareness to the issue of climate change.

"Nationally, it is about creating change," DuVernay said about the protest. "But locally it was mostly about

informing people."

DuVernay got the idea to hold a protest in La Grande after taking a career readiness class his junior year. When the class studied the environment, he became interested in climate change and what he can do to help prevent it. When he heard about the global Climate Strike, he went online to organize one in town.

"I thought we should be a part of the movement," DuVernay said.

After filling out forms from the United Nation's website, DuVernay went to members of the community, including his school, city council and Union County, to find out how they would like

to see the event handled.

While the city was very supportive, DuVernay said he was less than happy with how the school handled the situation.

"Unfortunately, they would not allow the absences to be excused," DuVernay said. "A lot of students I knew wanted to participate (but they) couldn't because they were athletes and it would mean not being able to play in games this weekend."

According to DuVernay, about 20 high school students left school to attend the protest. Approximately 60 others — adults, parents, younger kids and

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Bikers hit the trails at MERA

■ Blue Mountain Singletrack Club shows what MERA trails have to offer

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

Mount Emily Recreation Area was well used Saturday morning as the Blue Mountain Singletrack Trails Club hosted MERA MTB Day. Giving new and experienced riders a chance to bike together and providing free tours on the kid-safe trails, the club showcased what the MERA trails have to offer for mountain bikers of all ages.

One focus of the event was to introduce families to MERA's options. The Blue Mountain Singletrack Trails Club offered guided tours of the kid-friendly trails, including the new Parent Trap trail. Many parents saw this as a great opportunity to get their children outdoors for the day and spend time together as a family.

"The thing with mountain biking versus riding in town (is) you don't have to worry about traffic," club member Elijah Romer said. "You're getting kids outside and experiencing the outdoors."

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the club took downhill enthusiasts and their cycles up the mountain in a shuttle from Eastern Oregon University's Outdoor Adventures Program. Those riders who were already members of the club rode for free, while those who were not could purchase a day pass for \$15. The 15-minute ride gave people a chance to talk and connect over their shared interest in mountain biking.

"We just think it's a good way to get people involved in the outdoors, and it's a good way to stay in shape," club member Ed Mosinan said

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Oregon lawmakers mourn no special session

By Jessica Pollard
EO Media Group

SALEM — When Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared Wednesday that no special session would be held to make a correction to the contentious death penalty bill, state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, was disheartened.

"It was a big surprise to us, and a huge disappointment too. We needed to make that correction to be consistent, and for the victims," Hansell said.



Hansell

When it passed through regular session, lawmakers believed that Senate Bill 1013, which redefines the crime of aggravated murder and narrows down what crimes could result in the death penalty, would not be retroactive. But after the law passed, the Oregon Department of Justice stated it could apply to some people already on death row.

Hansell didn't vote for the bill dur-

ing the regular session; he believed instead that the decision to change the rules surrounding the death penalty should go to voters, who amended the state constitution in 1984 to legalize capital punishment.

Hansell believes the bill is a "sneaky" way to undo what voters instituted years ago. He added that if lawmakers had known there was a possibility the bill could affect people already sentenced to death, the floor debate would have looked completely different.

"We changed the definition so

what the people voted on is actually changed. We changed it to the point where it is basically repealed," he said. "If you want to change it, let the people change it. They may well have had the votes to change it."

Either way, he said, he was in favor of holding a special session to correct the part of the bill that made it retroactive.

Hansell credited Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, a senator who chairs the Judiciary Committee behind the bill,

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 51 LOW Partly cloudy
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