

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK**

## Please, think before you post

Social media has been something of a boon for many of us during the coronavirus outbreak. In our efforts to stay home and save lives, Facebook and other platforms have helped us, well, be social.

We're sharing our pictures, listing our favorite movies, making each other guess about which jobs we didn't work.

I asked friends to share photos on my Facebook page. The response was a bit stunning — 86 comments. It was enjoyable. I even awarded points. Sunday, I posted this to my Facebook page: "Finish the simile: I'm social distancing like ..."



**PHIL WRIGHT**  
OBSERVER EDITOR

One friend replied with "Wilson in 'Cast-away.'" Another ended the line

with "Howard Hughes."

But last week also revealed the dark side of the power of social media, and locals and a La Grande business are paying for it through no fault of their own.

First off, I'm not naming the business or others involved. That is a step outside how I usually write about anything I report on. But this isn't a news article, and the players are not the point.

The gist is a local person heard that someone associated with a La Grande businesses was in contact with someone who had COVID-19. The business continued to operate, and the person who heard the rumor took to Facebook and let their family, friends and followers there know about it.

The problem was, none of it was true.

Still, others shared that post. According to comments on the person's Facebook page, more than 40 people shared it. And no telling how far the rumor went from there.

The person took to Facebook again Friday to try and clear up the mess, admitting to causing "a massive chain reaction that has negative consequences for many involved" and to deleting the original post.

The person apologized "for posting confusing information which lead to people freaking out even more." The person explained fear was behind the reason for making the original post.

"The chain reaction has been nuts and I apologize for adding to any additional stress we are already under," the person concluded. "Please share."

So far, just 10 people have passed on the apology.

Yes, this is a scary time, but that is all the more reason not to post out of panic and ignorance. What this person did is the equivalent of yelling "fire" in a crowded movie house when there was no fire.

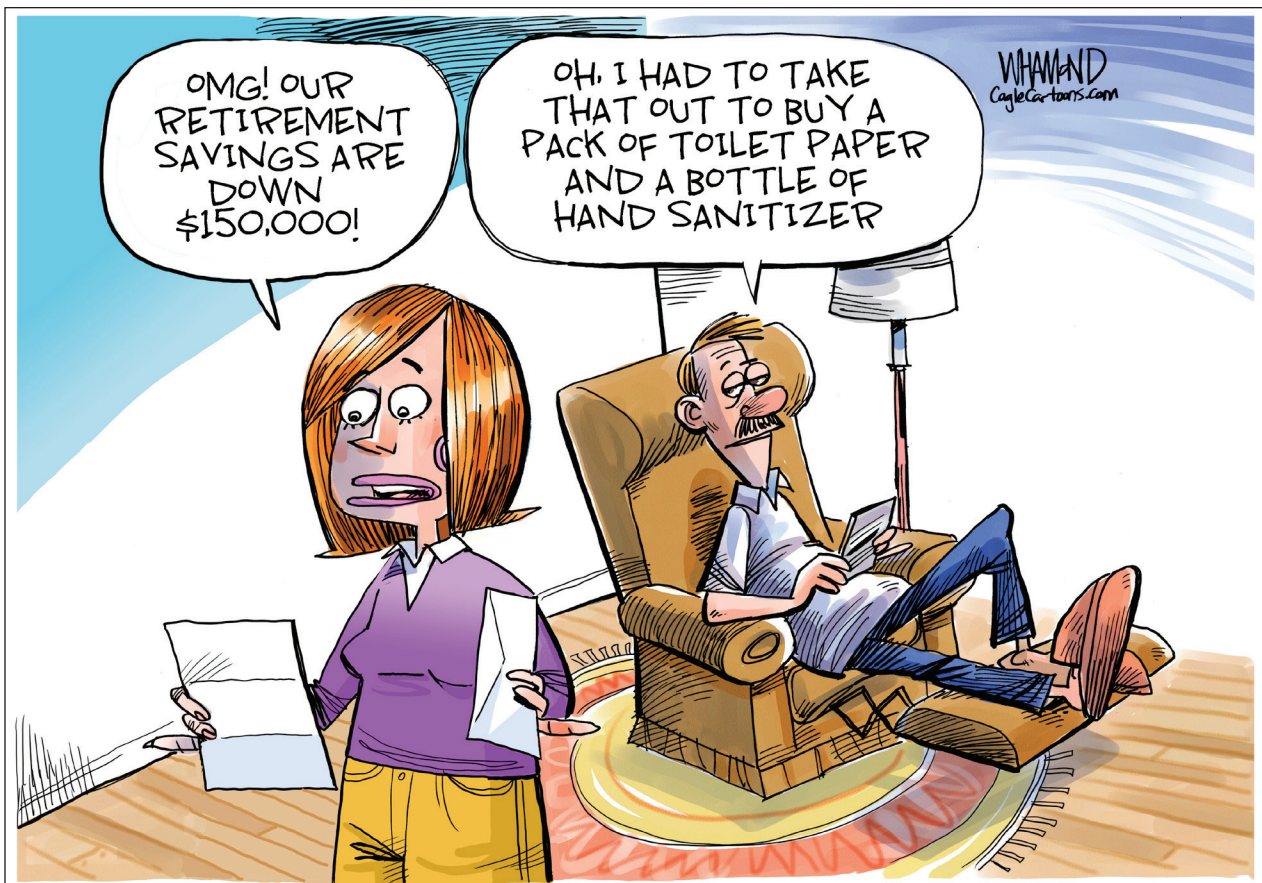
Perhaps the person who made this fear post will take a hit to their reputation. The person who was the subject of the post sure could be feeling that. Fear may have driven customers from the business, so it could sustain real economic damage. One of the comments on the apology asked how many customers the business could lose.

And the rumor did not contain itself to Facebook, jumping beyond the walls of the internet. How ironic a rumor about a virus can behave like a virus.

Taking a moment to think about what we post, asking someone to read something that could be inflammatory, are the least any of us can do. The sensible thing is to just fact check.

And don't post even when you have it on the word of an "authority" or someone "in the know." Anyone who is an actual authority already has the megaphone to speak to the public. If that person in the know is not issuing a statement, someone does not need to act as their mouthpiece.

Organizations and individuals at all levels, from the Ad Council to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown to local public safety bosses are reminding us we are in this together. Yelling "COVID-19 over here" without merit is a quick way to undermine that unity.



## Your views

### B2H – Quality of our parks, roads and resources should not be for sale

I would like to share some plans for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line that directly impact citizens of Union County:

The developer would not have to comply with the Department of Environmental Quality maximum standards for noise. If you live within half a mile of the line, you will experience noise from it, and many will be above Department of Environmental Quality safety standards.

Idaho Power would be required to post a bond in the amount of \$1 for 50 years. This bond is supposed to protect landowners, citizens, electric customers and taxpayers from being stuck with the costs of removing the transmission line.

The developer can use the Morgan Lake Road without doing the upgrades requested by the city of La Grande. Instead, they will complete a "Traffic Control Plan" with the Union County Planning Department. This plan will deny residents and citizens, who paid for these roads, the use of them during times the developer's heavy trucks and equipment would be using them. This plan will allow Idaho Power to avoid making the upgrades to roads to accommodate their vehicles. This "plan" will apply to all county roads, and involves no citizen input even though we paid

for the roads and rely upon them to access local parks, our homes, schools, churches, etc.

The city manager of La Grande has agreed to accept \$100,000 in payment for the damage to the views from Morgan Lake Park. Once again, this "agreement" was made absent any input from the citizens who paid for the park and use it.

The citizens of Union County paid for the resources that are being damaged. Agreements to "sell" the quality of our parks, roads, and resources need to stop being made in secret.

It is time to demand protection for our quality of life.

*Irene Gilbert  
La Grande*

### Rasmussen's qualifications are unmatched

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter to support the re-election of Boyd Rasmussen for Union County Sheriff. Boyd's love for Eastern Oregon, his understanding of what makes Union County unique, his work ethic and his leadership abilities are unmatched.

Boyd has deep and strong roots here in Eastern Oregon. He was born and raised in this amazing valley and graduated from EOU. I too, a lifelong resident and friend of Boyd's, am impressed with his wisdom, fierce work ethic and ded-

ication to his role as sheriff. Boyd has remained that same outgoing, respectful and hardworking person all these years. I have also watched him apply his leadership abilities in his professional life as the Union County Sheriff since 2005. In doing so he has built a highly productive and trustworthy sheriff's department.

As Boyd chose law enforcement for his career path, I chose to work in the counseling field with teenagers in trouble with the law. Over the years we've had great conversations about juvenile justice. I am grateful for Boyd's positive approach to improving the lives of youth in our communities and most of all for making decisions that keep our schools and children safe. He is a strong advocate for having officers in our school systems and believes in building positive relationships with youth in the community. He also enjoys being involved in activities such as coaching Optimist football and in community projects with his family.

It has never been more important for Eastern Oregon to have a sheriff at the helm with the wisdom and grit to defend the liberties that make Eastern Oregon great. Boyd has what it takes and will continue to stand up for and promote the freedoms we hold very dear here in Eastern Oregon.

*Cassie Miller  
Union*

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

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