

MAIL

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analysis — to a choice between voting by mail or not voting at all,” he said in an interview with the East Oregonian on Monday.

But the concept also has drawn a strong backlash from President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans.

On March 30, Trump told Fox News that if national vote by mail was passed, “you’d never have a Republican elected in this country again.” He followed that up with an April 8 tweet where he said mail-in votes “doesn’t work out well for Republicans.”

Wyden rejected the argument that vote by mail provided a partisan advantage, noting it wasn’t backed up by political science research or historical evidence.

“By the way, vote by mail originally was backed in Oregon by Republicans,” he said. “Then, when I won the special election, everything changed. Republicans didn’t like vote by mail, Democrats did. Oregonians said nuts on all of you partisans. We’re just going to put



Observer file photo

Mail carrier Tom Colton delivers parcels in October 2019 to a home in La Grande. Interest in vote-by-mail has grown over the past few months, but U.S. sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon has been trying to get a national mail-in ballot system for nearly two decades.

on the ballot, and we have seen strong support in both political parties.”

Wyden said he was the first U.S. senator to win a vote-by-mail election, but former Repub-

lican Sen. Gordon Smith was the second. Colorado passed vote by mail in 2013, and a year later, voters elected GOP Sen. Cory Gardner over a Democratic incumbent.

MARKET

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has changed due to layoffs.

But while the market isn’t bustling at the level it was a month ago, Shawna McKinnis, real estate broker and owner at RE/MAX Real Estate, La Grande, said the market remains active.

“We are still getting calls to list and show properties,” she said.

Anna Goodman, Century 21 real estate broker in La Grande, said all the agents in her office have work.

“Some buyers are going to hold off, but there are still some buyers out there looking,” she said.

While some sectors of Wallowa County’s economy are suffering greatly from COVID-19 shutdowns, real estate seems to be holding its own.

“I’ve had calls and listings are coming in,” said Claressa O’Connor of Timberline Realty, Joseph.

“That’s surprising. Listings are coming in. Nobody’s afraid to list things.”

New ways to show homes

One showing was particularly memorable, O’Connor said.

“I did have a showing where the owner said they had a caregiver in the house

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS DATA FROM RECENT SURVEY

- 45% of members said the stock market correction and lower mortgage rates roughly balanced out, noting no significant change in buyer behavior.
- The majority of members, 61%, reported no change in sellers removing homes from the market, down from 81% a week ago.
- Four in 10 members said home sellers have not changed how their home is viewed while it remains on the market. One week ago, nearly eight in 10 members – 77% – said the same.

and the owner, an older gentleman, was very frail,” she recalled. “Their agent called and said, ‘There will be gloves and masks on a table (outside) where you enter the house. Please put them on.’”

O’Connor’s client decided to skip the showing because she didn’t want to put anyone at risk.

“Distancing is something we are doing now,” O’Connor said.

Precautions for real estate brokers include limits on the number of people per showing, sanitizing hands before entering and after leaving a property, wearing booties, gloves and masks, and wiping down everything with a Clorox or other sanitizing wipe.

“We are doing more virtual showings on Face-time and other platforms,” said Anette Christoffersen of Ruby Peak Real Estate, Joseph. “We are showing to only two people at a time and they need to be pre-

qualified with a letter from a lender. We are supposed to be wearing face masks, and there’s a screening questionnaire we can give to clients.”

Howard said it comes down to protecting the Realtors, the buyers and the sellers from COVID-19.

Urban refugees

Diane Daggett, a premier agent with the national real estate website Zillow as well as Ruby Peak, said she has seen some interest from what she termed “urban refugees.”

“I get a ton of Zillow calls,” she said. “About a third of the calls I’ve had in the last two weeks have been people looking for something in a very remote area. One call, for example, was from a man in the Portland area who was refinancing his house so he could buy a place away from everything. There’s definitely a fear.”

The ability for someone

to move from one home to another also is uncertain.

“We in the moving business are usually right behind the real estate market,” said Kaiger Braseth, general manager of Mountain West Moving and Storage, La Grande.

Braseth explained with fewer people buying houses, less people will need movers. He said with social distancing measures, many people are renting trucks to move themselves and some are postponing moves until things become more stable.

Braseth predicts if the trend continues, moving companies could suffer, but he said there always will be business as people need to move out by certain dates and cannot always move themselves.

Lenders get leery

The availability of loans has taken a hit, however. It’s not so much from a lack of consumer credit as it is the government’s bailout.

“The forbearance is a great opportunity for people to get some relief from mortgage payments,” Daggett said. “But if that person is purchasing a new house and they exercise their forbearance right on the first payment due, it disqualifies that loan from being sold on the secondary

allegation.”

While U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, whose Second Congressional District spans both Umatilla and Morrow counties, has been elected several times through vote by mail, he’s joined his Republican colleagues in opposing a national vote-by-mail system.

In an interview with Politico, Walden called implementing national vote by mail a “recipe for disaster,” because states would have only a few months to put it into place, rather than the “multi-decade experience” Oregon went through.

The Oregon Legislature passed a law allowing local elections to be conducted by mail in 1981, and in the ensuing years, the state would expand the system to include special elections and primaries.

After the Legislature failed to pass a vote-by-mail system for all elections, Oregon voters passed Measure 60 in 1998 with nearly 70% of the vote and majorities in every county.

Wyden said the difference between now and the early 2000s is many states

already are moving toward expanding mail-in voting, so many states wouldn’t be pioneering a new method like Oregon did.

“Back in 2002, we had so many states that said, for example, you had to have an excuse, in order to vote by mail,” he said. “A lot of states have gotten rid of that kind of thing. So basically, what I’m talking about is not reinventing the wheel. It’s basically upscaling what we’re already doing.”

Despite an attempt by the governor to delay the primary, Wisconsin went through with its primaries on April 7, an event that was on Wyden’s mind when he said he would make a strong effort to include a national vote-by-mail system in a future COVID-19 economic relief package.

“I want people to know I am going to fight with every ounce of my strength to get vote by mail in the next COVID package, because I don’t want to see all over this country in November, another gross spectacle, the way we saw in Wisconsin, that is putting the safety and well-being of Americans on the line,” he said.

TIPS

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Smith noted children are accustomed to the structured environment and routine they experience in school.

“Set a schedule that works for your family and your child,” said Smith, who will become the new principal of Island City Elementary in July, succeeding Tolan, who is retiring.

Imbler School District Superintendent Angie Lakey-Campbell suggested families have their children follow the routines they did when regular school was in session.

If children normally got up at 7 a.m. and got dressed, they should do the same now on weekdays since this will put them in the frame of mind to study. The superintendent has observed teachers providing instruction over the past week in which some children were still in their pajamas when talking with their teachers. She would prefer children to be dressed to make them feel like they are ready for school.

Patience a virtue

Lakey-Campbell encouraged parents not to get too anxious when dealing with the challenges posed by helping their children with distance education.

“Be patient and maintain your sanity,” she said.

The Imbler educator also said parents need to remember teachers, who likely are new to the world of distance education, share the frustrations they and students are experiencing.

Some Imbler teachers are reporting they feel more tired after a day of teaching via distance education than when instructing in the classroom. Lakey-Campbell said she believes this is because they are spending most their day in front of computer screens.

Tolan noted his teachers not only feel amplified stress from the new mode of instruction but also because a number are parents of children who are participating in distance learning. This means they must serve as parents and teachers simultaneously.

“Some are teaching with two or three children at home,” Tolan said.

The stress parents are experiencing as they help their children with distance education can be alleviated to a degree if they understand their roles. He encouraged parents to think of themselves as learning partners with their children.

Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells echoed this sentiment.

“Parents are not expected to have a bachelor’s degree in education,” Wells said. “You can create a classroom environment but you cannot replicate a classroom at home.”

Support for parents

Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif said she wants parents to understand they are not alone as they help their children with distance learning.

Throughout the school districts, teachers remain available to give assistance and advice to students and to their parents through

email, phone calls and online classroom platforms.

“Do not panic,” she said. “This is new to everybody.”

Tolan anticipates that the sometimes rough waters of the transition to distance education will get smoother.

“We will get better each week as we work out the kinks,” the Island City principal said.

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Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics proudly welcomes: Kim Myers, AGACNP-BC, FNP-BC

To the Grande Ronde Hospital team as a Hospitalist

Kim Myers, dual-certified nurse practitioner, joins the GRH Hospitalist team from Altamonte Springs, Florida, where she worked as a nursing instructor and simulation coordinator for the Cambridge Institute of Allied Health & Technology. She completed her Master's Degree at the University of South Alabama, and her undergraduate degree at Adventist University of Health Sciences. In the future, Kim hopes to complete her doctor of nursing practice degree. Kim has interests in whole person, patient-centered care, with special interests in inpatient, critical care, and palliative care medicine. Outside of work, Kim enjoys spending time with her husband, four children, and Labrador retriever. She has interests in travel, reading, cooking, scuba diving, sailing, hiking, running, and horseback riding.



Kim Myers, AGACNP-BC, FNP-BC

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