



RE-ELECT

BOYD RASMUSSEN

for

SHERIFF

Paid for by committee to Re-elect Boyd Rasmussen.

Denny & Colleen Langford, Bonnie Dunn, Tod & Angel Hull

THE OBSERVER

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TUESDAY • April 28, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued Sarah Swanson of La Grande

Sheriff responds to DOJ investigation claim

Rasmussen, Bowen still have to work together in sheriff’s office

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Rumors about the Oregon Department of Justice’s investigation into Union County Sheriff Boyd Ras-



Rasmussen



Bowen

mussen swirled since mid-2019, but no who knew anything wanted to talk on the record.

That silence came to an end Saturday when The Observer featured responses to questions about the race for sheriff.

Rasmussen is seeking a fifth term. One of his challengers, deputy Cody Bowen, in an answer addressing rumors about the race, stated Rasmussen told him about the details of the ongoing justice department investigation.

Rasmussen responded Monday with a written statement, calling the investigation “a process with which we have fully cooperated, and I am con-

fident that I will ultimately be cleared of any accusations against me.”

Neither candidate provided details about the investigation.

Rasmussen, however, took plenty of jabs at Bowen, stating the school resource officer “has insinuated that I have ‘chosen the wrong path’ and he speculates that I have engaged in some wrongdoing. This conclusion was

based on a conversation with me about the existence of an investigation and little else.” He contended Bowen is not privy to the details of this investigation and drew his conclusion “without knowing even a fraction of the facts being evaluated.” He called Bowen’s move to reveal the investigation “unbecoming of any police officer, let

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By the numbers*

Worldwide cases: 2,883,603
Worldwide deaths: 198,842
U.S. cases: 957,875
U.S. deaths: 53,922
Oregon cases: 2,354
Oregon deaths: 92
Union County cases: 4
Union County deaths: 0
Wallowa County cases: 1
Wallowa County deaths: 0

*As of 2 p.m. Monday, April 27. Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority

Banners honor UHS graduates

They provide recognition after loss of graduation ceremony

By Dick Mason
The Observer

UNION — Motorists have 34 new, colorful and compelling reasons to brake or slow down while driving along Main Street in Union.

The city’s downtown now looks something like a page out of Union High School’s 2020 yearbook, with personalized banners honoring each of the school’s 34 graduating seniors adorning utility poles.

“It is a great way to give the kids the recognition they richly deserve,” said Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells.

Paul Phillips and Ralph Riomondo with the Union Public Works Department



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Ralph Riomondo of the city of Union’s Public Works Department on Friday afternoon rolls up a banner saluting Union High School senior Shayne Ritter before the work crew mounted it on a utility pole on Union’s main street.

Fager, Smith speak at forum for GOP congressional candidates

EO Media Group forums for 2nd District candidates are Friday, Saturday

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County’s two Republican congressional candidates took strong stands on hot-button conservative issues Wednesday during a virtual forum for Oregon’s 2nd District candidates.

Travis Fager of La Grande and Jeff Smith of Elgin were among eight

Republican candidates who participated in the forum, which the Jackson County Republican Central Committee conducted.

Smith took one of the strongest positions, calling for the abolishment of the federal government’s Endangered Species Act. He spoke of how the ESA, which took effect in 1971, is hurting rural Oregon by



Fager

reducing the timber available for harvest because of efforts to protect the northern spotted owl. Smith said the act puts too much power in the hands of judges ruling on ESA cases.

“I’m for the repeal of the Endangered Species Act,” Smith said. “We need



Smith

to get back to where we were.”

Smith, a computer programmer who grew up in Elgin, recalled what life was like in Union and Wallowa counties before forests were was locked up to protect the spotted owl. He said there were at least 10 sawmills in the two counties and a more vibrant economy fueled by natural resource industries.

“It was giving people a

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HOW TO WATCH

WHAT: EOMG’s Oregon 2nd Congressional District forums
WHEN: Democrat forum is 6:30 p.m., Friday, May 1; Republican forums are 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, May 2.
WHERE: Streaming live on The Observer Facebook page. Forums can be rewatched after the event at www.lagrandeobserver.com on EOALive.tv.
QUESTIONS: Submit questions in advance by email to CD2forum@eomediagroup.com or on Facebook Live during the event.

County unemployment claims now exceed 1,300

Union County has added 57% more claims to the five-week total since coronavirus-related closures began

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Initial unemployment claims nationwide exceeded 4 million for the fourth week in a row as jobs continue to be lost in the wake of shutdowns caused by the coro-

navirus pandemic. The U.S. Department of Labor announced Thursday an additional 4.4 million claims for the week ending April 18, bringing the total of nationwide claims to more than 26 million in the last

five weeks. The number is down from 5.2 million last week and from the peak of 6.8 million.

Oregon — and Union County — are following a similar trend. The state saw 36,700 claims filed for the week ending April 18, according to the state’s Employment Department, which brings the total in the last five weeks to about 333,700. The weekly

number is the lowest in the five weeks since government-imposed closures began, but still are nearly double the highest seen at the peak of the Great Recession of 2007-09, which saw a week with nearly 21,000 layoffs. The downward trend of the last couple weeks may be in danger, too, in coming

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Educators have had these tools at their disposal for awhile. That includes smart boards that record what is written on them, and Google Classroom that, similar to ZOOM, allows everyone to see and interact with one another. But now they are essentials.

For JCS, middle and high school online education occurs on a schedule similar to regular classes.

“As of April 13, the first official day of distance

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
45 LOW
Mostly cloudy

Wednesday
77/48
A.p.m. shower

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



THURSDAY HEALTHY HABITS

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