JOBLESS

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weeks as The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Thursday the state hopes to begin processing claims for self-employed workers and contractors as early as next week.

Unemployment claims in Union County, which peaked two weeks ago when 311 people filed, also saw the number drop to the lowest in five weeks. The county had 179 initial claims for the week ending April 18, the first time the claims have been below 265 since the stay-at-home orders went into effect.

Still, that pushes the number of claims processed in Union County above 1,300, which is about double the number of people unemployed in February, according to the Employment Department website.

In all, 1,347 claims have been filed in the county since the week ending March 15. That number is up 57.1% in the last two weeks.

Manufacturing (48 claims), health care and social assistance (36) and accommodations and food service (30) were the three hardest-hit industries in Union County over the past week.

Manufacturing continues to be the most severely impacted industry in the county. It has seen the most job losses each of the last five weeks. It reached 184 claims filed the first week following state and nationwide closures, and had 139 for the week ending April 11.

All told, 570 of Union County's claims have been in manufacturing jobs, which accounts for 42.3% of all layoffs in the county the past five weeks, and 43.5% of the 1,310 jobs the industry reported having in February.

Accommodations and food service (255 claims) and health care of social assistance (156) continue to be the second and third most-impacted industries in the county in the last five weeks.

Baker County, which saw its highest one-week jump in claims during the week ending April 11 with 139, added 95 to the unemployment rolls in the past week, bringing its five-week total to 535. Wallowa County's total unemployment claims nearly doubled in the last two weeks, adding 53 and 34 for a count of 197. Umatilla County saw 1,118 new claims in the past two weeks, giving it a five-week total of 2,767 jobs lost. Each of the three counties has seen a higher percent-increase in losses than Union County in the last two weeks, with Umatilla County up an additional 67.8%, Baker County up 77.7% and Wallowa County up 79.1%.

The pandemic has impacted the neighboring counties in different ways. Nearly one-third of the jobs lost in Umatilla County (911) and about 30% in Baker County (160) have been in accommodation and food service, the most-impacted industry in those counties. Wallowa County's hardest-hit industry is unclear as several of the claim numbers are marked as confidential.

ONLINE

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learning, we went back to a set schedule," Kilgore said.

High school students know that, for example, at 9 a.m. they are in English class, at 10 they go to their math class, at 11 their science class starts.

Many teachers do the classes from their regular classrooms where they have access to their materials.

More teachers are putting videos of their lessons online. In the past, this practice has helped students who are traveling for athletics or FFA keep up to speed. They can watch it when they have time, and they aren't falling behind.

In the primary grades, teachers must touch base with each student once a week. Most are in contact more often. So there's been a lot of phone calls, a lot of Google Classroom, and other academic software.

Photo by Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

Megan Pinkerton (left) has Lynn Bradshaw sign for homeschool materials she dropped off in April for Lynn's daughter Savannah, lower right. Enterprise, like Joseph, delivers breakfast, lunch, and both drop off and pick up "paper and pencil" lessons.

Parents are working closely with their kids because "… a kindergartner really can't get on the internet for a class all by themselves," Superintendent Lance Homan said.

At JCS, every student — with the exception of the six elementary students in Imnaha and one family who is out of range of cell service and internet — has access to online classes, courtesy of school-owned Chromebook laptops and "hotspots."

Still, some families want their students to learn via paper and pencil.

For those students, the buses that deliver 145 breakfasts and lunches are an academic lifeline.

They take student work back to the teachers and deliver the teacher's comments, corrections, assignments and more to the students.

Virtual learning, however, may create a gap for teachers to address later.

"Without the face-to-face daily contact, I think that is impossible," Kilgore said. "The opportunity for rigor is there if they want it. But when we go back to classroom learning in the fall, we'll be taking into account that we have had the two extremes of learning and everything in the middle."

DOJ

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alone anyone who thinks they possess the skill and knowledge to manage the complexities of the Union County Sheriff's Office as I have for the past 15 years."

Bowen, however, said he spoke with Rasmussen directly about the investigation and looked into the facts for himself.

"He told me he had done nothing criminally wrong, 'just some ethical violations'," Bowen said. "I am not OK with 'just ethical violations."

Rasmussen claimed Bowen knew about the inquiry before he and the local law enforcement union gave its endorsement for the sheriff in November. Bowen then was president of the union. According to Bowen, the sheriff at the time said the investigation was due to disgruntled employees. After checking it out the claim, Bowen said he decided to run for sheriff.

The sheriff said campaigns can bring out the worst in people.

"Bowen seems ready to say anything if he believes it will help him win," Ramussen stated.

The two also differ on the nature of their past professional relationship

Before running against his boss, Bowen said Rasmussen was prepping him to take over as sheriff and there were conversations about him running for sheriff after this next term. Rasmussen said those discussions were about Bowen getting more leadership training, education and broader experience in law enforcement for the future should he decide to run.

Bowen and Rasmussen continue to work together. Rasmussen said it has been relatively smooth so far. Bowen noted it has been a little bit awkward due to the change in their professional relationship.

"I feel like we will never have the relationship we used to have," Bowen said.

Sheriff's candidate Shane Rollins said Rasmussen should address the public on the issue and will make no further comment. And candidate Bill Miller used to be a sergeant in the sheriff's office and left because he did not want his name tired to Ramussen's.

"I'm not surprised he is under investigation," he said. "I left because of differences in leadership philosophies, his behaviors and how he treated his command staff. All things I witnessed and later confirmed with other people."

FORUMS

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way of life, and the federal government took it away," he said.

The candidate also spoke of the need to lower the cost of medical care, which he said is rising at twice the rate of inflation.

"It is on an unsustainable track," Smith said.

He attributed this to a shortage of health care professionals, which is creating a supply and demand situation boosting costs.

"We need to graduate at least three times as many doctors and nurses each year (to effectively address the shortage)," Smith said.

He said the high cost of medical care is one of the top causes of bankruptcies in the United States. He also said he feels strongly about the Second Amendment, just as Fager does.

"I am not going to give my guns away, and I am not going to support laws that ask other people to," Smith said.

Fager said he believes guns are essential to retaining liberty.

"You cannot have liberty without guns, end of story," Fager said. "Do I love guns? Put all trust in them? Do I believe they are a savior? No, I do not, but they are essential for liberty. Without them you can forget about freedom."

He said if citizens did not have guns, the United States would be at risk of being "completely run over by the government."

Fager said he considers himself a regular person, noting that his campaign slogan is, "It is time for a career commoner. It is time for a common citizen with common sense."

He said he has a wide variety of professional experiences, including work in commercial fishing and construction. He said these experiences would serve him well in Congress, a setting where he would try to apply "out-of-the-box thinking and concepts."

Fager and Smith both said if elected they would be opposed to any tax increases.

"The federal government has proven time and again that it will not live on its own budget. I see absolutely no reason to raise taxes, to take money and give it to a government, which has no end to its ability to spend money," Smith said.

Fager said taxes are hitting the middle class too hard.

Fager and Smith were joined at the virtual forum by candidates Cliff Bentz of Ontario, David Campbell of White City, Knute Buehler of Bend, Jason Atkinson of Central Point, Justin Livingston of Bend, and Jimmy Crumpacker of Tumalo.

All are seeking to succeed Greg Walden, R-Hood River, who is completing his 20th year in Congress and is not running for reelection.

The EO Media Group also is sponsoring online forums Friday and Saturday for the 16 candidates running to replace Walden. The forum for Democratic candidates is Friday and there are two forums Saturday for Republican candidates.

La Grande-based Eastern Oregon Alive TV will livestream the forums, and you also can view them on The Observer's Facebook page.

If you are unable to watch the events live, the forums will be available for viewing later on The Observer's website and at EOAlive.tv.

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