

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

EOMG forums offer chance to make informed decision

Elections are important. They are the bedrock of our democracy, the foundational element to our political system and are the body politic's way to continue with a series of lawmakers or make different choices.

That's why I believe the upcoming online candidate forums, sponsored by the EO Media Group, are so important and, if you allow, necessary.

Especially now, an opportunity for voters to connect with candidates is crucial. This isn't a typical election season. That's why the online forums, which



PHIL WRIGHT
OBSERVER EDITOR

will be live-streamed and will not have a live audience because of the COVID-19

virus outbreak, are essential for voters.

The forums broadcast Friday, May 1, for Democratic candidates for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District and Saturday, May 2, for Republican candidates.

There are 16 candidates running for the seat. The EO Media Group sponsorship of the forums is an important public service. We believe one of our core missions is to inform readers regarding issues that affect their lives.

Elections — who wins and who does not — have an effect at the local level.

The candidate we choose to represent us in Washington, D.C., is crucial to nearly every facet of our lives. That's why we must choose wisely and the forums will allow area voters to gain some perspective on all the candidates.

Normally, as we all know, by this time in an election season there already would have been numerous open debates, fundraisers for candidates and other opportunities to list and ask questions of the candidates. Because that just isn't possible now, the forums will help democracy. They furnish a platform for all of us to hear what the candidates have to say, their goals and their views on specific subjects. Election time is near. Ballots went out Wednesday and the primary election is May 19.

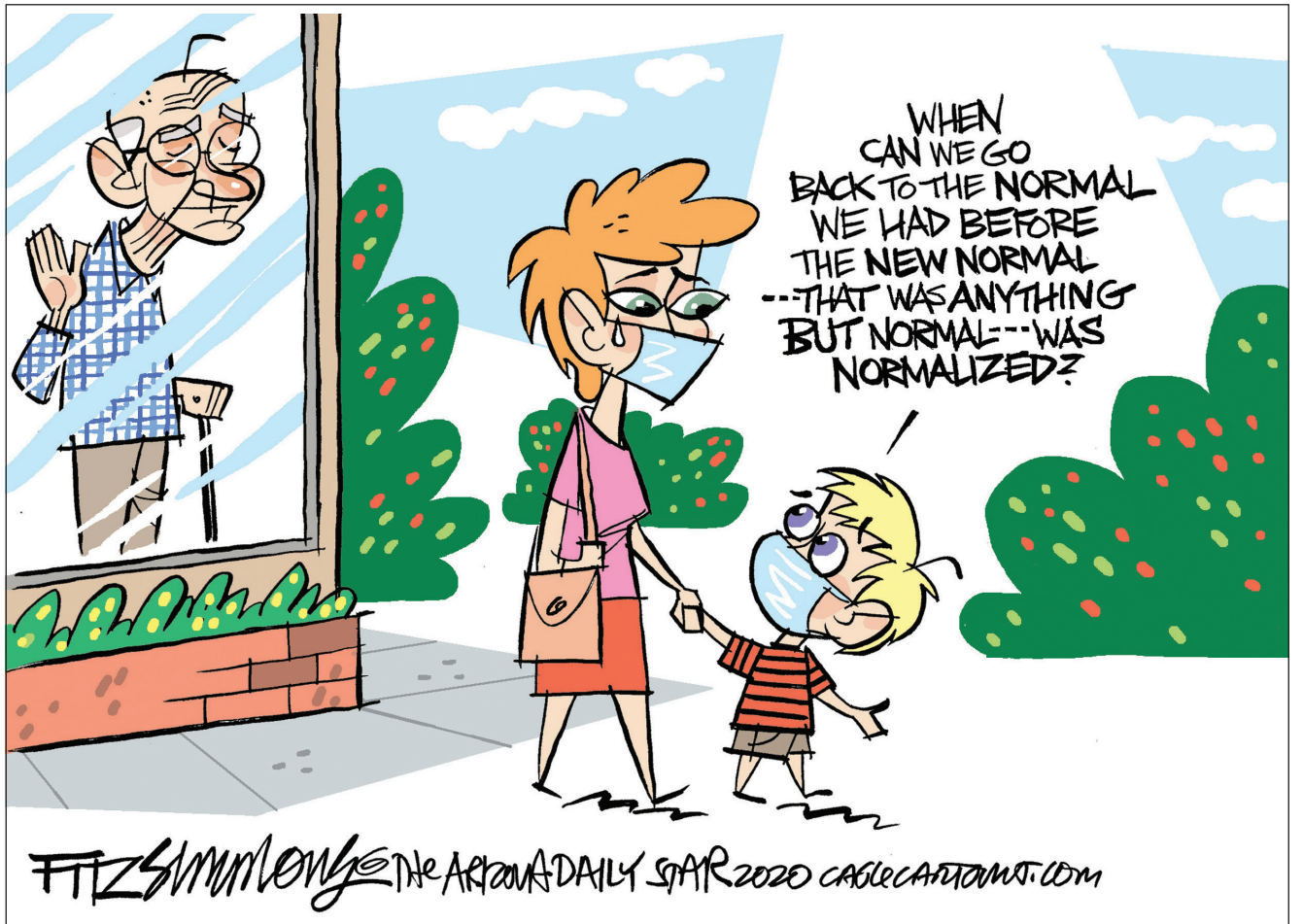
So that means time is at a premium. That's why I hope you all tune in, if you can, and watch.

La Grande-based Eastern Oregon Alive TV is live streaming the forums, which also will run on The Observer's Facebook page. If you are unable to watch the events live, the forums will be available for later viewing at your convenience on the The Observer's website or on EOAlive.tv.

The forums are being moderated by Chris Rush, the regional publisher of EO Media Group's east side publications, including The Observer. Viewers can submit questions to CD2forum@comediagroup.com in advance of the forums or on Facebook Live during the event.

The only way voters can make an informed decision is to hear what the candidates have to say.

So, if you get the chance, please go online and watch the forums. It isn't only a good way to be informed, but it is important to our democracy.



OTHER VIEW

Don't put off addressing medical needs

As medical staff president for Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics, I'd like to share some thoughts on our current situation with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most challenging issues a physician faces during this trying time is finding the balance between providing preventive health care while practicing social distancing.

On one hand, care provided now may prevent future health care problems; potentially avoiding hospitalization, surgery, etc. On the other hand, because there currently is no official cure or treatment for COVID-19 coming from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the best defense we have today is to limit our exposure to the coronavirus.

Our attempt to practice social distancing, however, should not limit communication between you and your provider. Many of our providers are already using Virtual Visits to consult with those patients for whom it is appropriate. So, if you need to be seen, we have the option of interacting with you via video conference if that makes sense. In addition, we are still providing urgent and emergent care every day. We continue to work for the overall health of our

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Andy Pearson is a

general surgeon and the president of the medical staff at Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics, La Grande.



patients, so please contact your provider with any questions you would normally ask before the advent of COVID-19.

One of the greatest concerns my colleagues and I have is that medical needs that should be taken care of now, and could be taken care of now, if not addressed will only exacerbate over time. If you are unsure whether you should see your provider, please call and discuss it with your provider directly. If you have MyChart, you have the option to direct message your provider to ask questions, as well. Remember, there is always the option of making an appointment if you and your provider determine the visit should take place in person. We are taking the utmost precautions to keep our employees and our patients safe from exposure to COVID-19. Rest assured that our hospital

is prepared to handle a disaster of monumental proportions at this time. Our incident command team has been thorough in their planning. Preparations in nearly every department (pharmacy, surgery, critical care, outpatient clinics, life flight, telemedicine, etc.) have focused on preparing to care for an influx of very ill COVID-19 patients. Although it is too early to know for sure, we are hopeful that a massive influx of patients will pass us by. In this case, our services should return to normal as soon as possible. In anticipation there could be a high demand for health care services once this event is over, we are currently exploring ways to extend our normal daytime operating hours to meet your needs.

On a final note, for more information on current recommendations regarding social distancing, provision of health care, and the status of our infection rate in Oregon, I would encourage you to visit the CDC and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) websites, in addition to our own website. Be cautious about accepting health care information from a source that is not credible.

Thank you for trusting us with your health care. As a provider, that is the highest compliment.

Your views

Draper right for OTEC board

I am writing this letter in support of Laurie Draper for the position of District 3 — Harney County for the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative Board of Directors.

Laurie is well grounded in the issues of electric co-ops with her husband, Rex, employed for 32 years as Harney Electric Co-op's Serviceman in its northern Harney County territory. She can recall the days before cell phones where there was no central dispatch and outage calls were taken directly at the linemen's home, usually by the spouse after he went out to correct the problem.

I have known Laurie for nearly 40 years and find her to be exceptionally intelligent, resourceful and interested in her

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community's well-being. It is highly unusual to have someone of her caliber willing to serve on a board, especially one as important as Oregon Trail's.

Not being an OTEC member, I have no axe to grind or expectation of some favor down the road by supporting Laurie for the board position. I live in Harney Electric Co-op's service territory and served as its General Manager from 1983 to 2002.

Have also known Bob Cargill for nearly as long as Laurie. I feel he has done a fine job on the OTEC Board. No one will

ever accuse me as a champion of diversity or change for their own sake. These are both quality candidates. However, if casting my ballot, I would choose Laurie Draper.

Thank you for considering my views.

*Jack Heaston
Rural Harney County*

Choose wisely when it comes to OTEC board

There are three members of the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative Board of Directors up for reelection this year.

Many of our electric cooperatives are facing challenging and demanding decisions in the coming few years, and this will impact the membership's ability to benefit from the affordable power that OTEC provides.

Key issues relating to federal and state legislative actions could have major damaging effects on OTEC members, while still providing reliable and constant power needs to meet demands. Ongoing infrastructure issues and the effects of the pandemic are creating for the first time in years many challenges that the board of directors are managing in conjunction with the leadership of the OTEC organization.

Typically it can take up to two years for each new board member to complete training, get certified and to gain the

knowledge needed to address the current critical issues facing the OTEC leadership. Can we afford this training time given the current circumstances? Therefore I ask you to take time to carefully consider your choice in selecting which individuals you think can provide our cooperative with strong, consistent and experienced leadership in the years ahead by casting your vote to re-elect board members.

The investments we have made as members of this cooperative in trusting and depending on these individuals to continue to provide our community with reliable power will be achieved if we chose to maintain the board's current level of knowledge and expertise.

*Julie Riel
Hines*

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