

OUR VIEW

Exercise your right to vote

The Observer issued an endorsement Saturday in the Union County sheriff's race, the most urgent and contentious election in the county. Before that, the EO Media Group's recent online forum for U.S. House District 2 candidates proved to be a success. Both races carry real stakes at the local level.

A gathering of candidates during an election to answer questions and present their views is always good news and should help voters who are undecided to make an informed choice. Such forums have been tougher to do in this election due to the restrictions to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Candidate forums have become de rigueur at the local level, having replaced real debate years ago. If there is any race begging for a real debate, it's the sheriff's race. But forums and news coverage can help voters make an informed choice.

As obvious as it sounds, to make an informed choice, one must vote. Union County as of Monday reported ballot returns of 15.7%, according to the Oregon Elections Division. Wallowa County stands at 14.6%. Both are above the statewide average of 12.4%.

With a week to go, those figures will trend up. The 2016 primary saw local voter turnout hit 78.5%.

We harp on the importance of voting from time to time for a good reason — because it is important. Voting is a fundamental right. There is no other more vital element to democracy than voting for who we want to serve as our public and political leaders.

Especially now as the entire nation staggers under the effects of the COVID-19 virus, our ability to exercise our right to vote is crucial.

The virus has changed our lives in fundamental ways, and going forward our nation will be different until the discovery of a vaccine that we can administer on a widespread basis. Until then, we will be subjected to a new paradigm, but what will continue to remain is our basic building block of government — voting.

Voting — even vote by mail — can end up being a chore. The ballot can sit on the kitchen table or on the couch or chair for days, seemingly forgotten as we all try to find a way to respond and overcome the challenges of COVID-19.

And too often we also hear the mantra, "My vote doesn't count."

Union County Clerk Robin Church has a take on that: That's true as long as you do not vote.

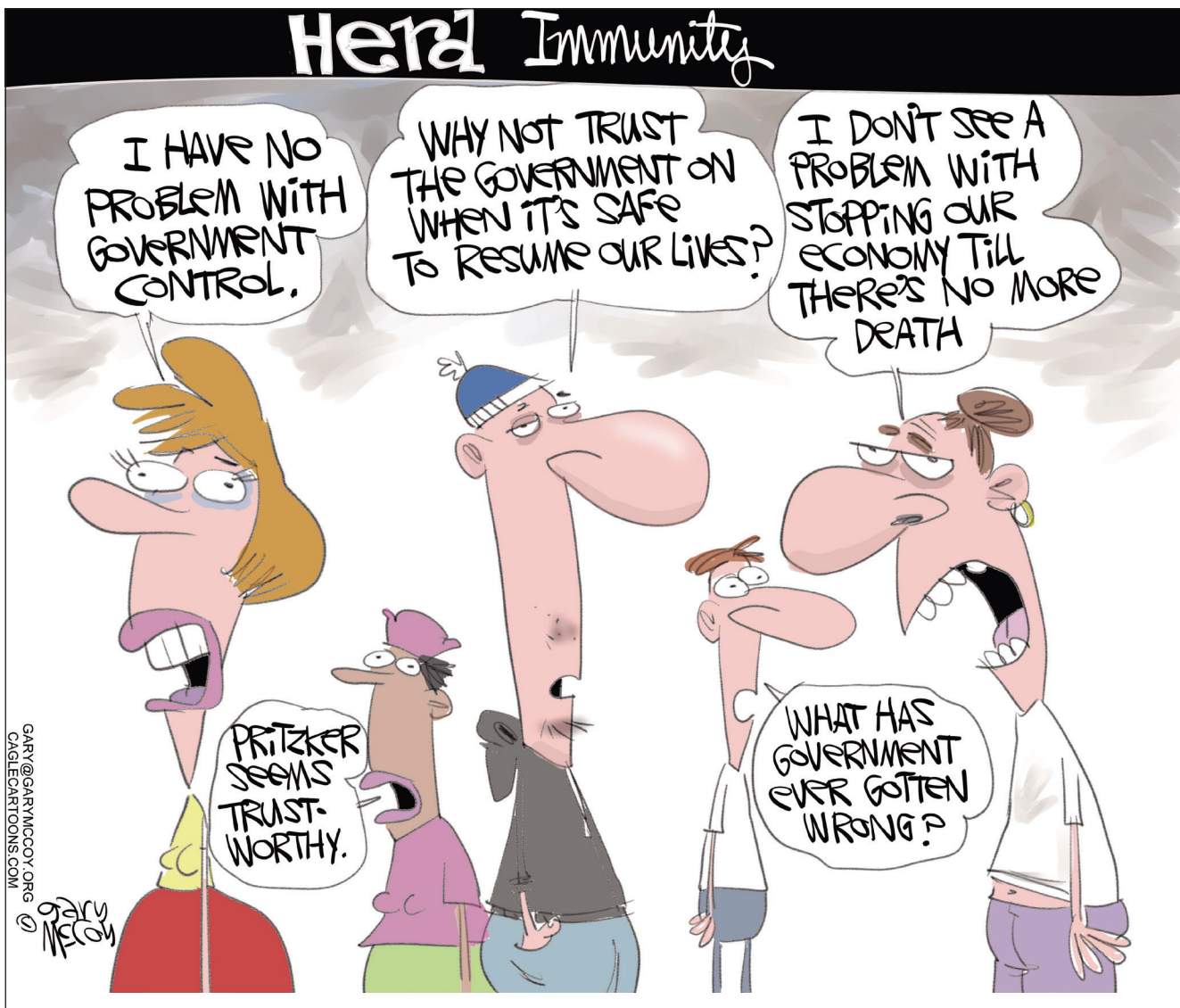
Even if you mess up on submitting your ballot, Church stressed, the staff at her office work diligently to verify your vote. But the one sure way to ensure your vote will not matter is not to cast it.

So, voters should not shrug off the primary election. A lot may not seem to be at stake. But voters in Union and Wallowa counties are determining who they want as sheriff.

And the importance of this election for 2nd Congressional District is huge for the future of not only Oregon but our little piece of it.

The primary election is Tuesday, May 19. Don't forget to vote.

And do not mail in your ballot. Instead, put it in a local ballot drop box to make sure it gets to the elections office.



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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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