

Our View

# Get ready to cast your ballot

Sharpen your pencils or make sure you have a pen with ink. Your ballots are about to arrive in the mail, and we urge all voters in Union County to vote.

The Nov. 3 election stands less than a month away. Voters pamphlets are arriving this week. Tuesday, Oct. 13, is the last day to register to vote. And the state starts mailing ballots just a day later. So it’s time for voters to evaluate candidates and make informed decisions.

The most interesting local race in the May primary was the three-way contest for Union County sheriff. Incumbent Boyd Rasmussen bailed out of the Nov. 3 vote in light of an ethics investigation, leaving his deputy Cody Bowen the only name on the ballot for the office. But former deputy Bill Miller is running a hot write-in campaign in spite of finishing third back in the spring.

But the most interesting local race this November is for the La Grande City Council. Voters in Union County’s big-gest town could overturn the council.

Four of the seven council seats as well as the mayor are up for election. Just one council seat — Position 6 — is open. And these races are heating up after the Union County Republican Central Committee displayed a letter on its website questioning whether the Democrats who serve on the council are fit to hold office only because they were Democrats.

Judging from the letters to the editor we’ve been getting about this, folks in town are not keen on partisan politics butting into the race for nonpartisan roles of public servants.

The lone county-wide measure seeks to mandate the county board of commissioners to meet three times a year to discuss promoting the county’s interest in relocating Idaho’s border to include Union County. While the likelihood of a new state of Greater Idaho seems so unlikely as to verge on the fantastic, if voters want to hold public meetings about it, so be it.

On the national level, of course, the general election packs a load of implications. There is little ambiguity regarding views on President Donald Trump or his challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden. (Their national debate would have made even Gore Vidal and William F. Buckley Jr. wince.) During the past 20 years, we’ve heard pundits and politicians tout elections as key for the future — and all elections are — but none can match the intensity and controversy Nov. 3 portends.

The last time a sitting president and a challenger presented such stark contrasts may have been 1984, when Republican President Ronald Reagan trounced Democrat Walter Mondale. It’s hard to image Mondale calling Reagan a “clown” during a national debate, yet there are parallels between these campaigns almost four decades apart.

Polls showed Mondale whopping Reagan, just as polls show Biden with comfortable margins over Trump. But on election night, Reagan won in a landslide.

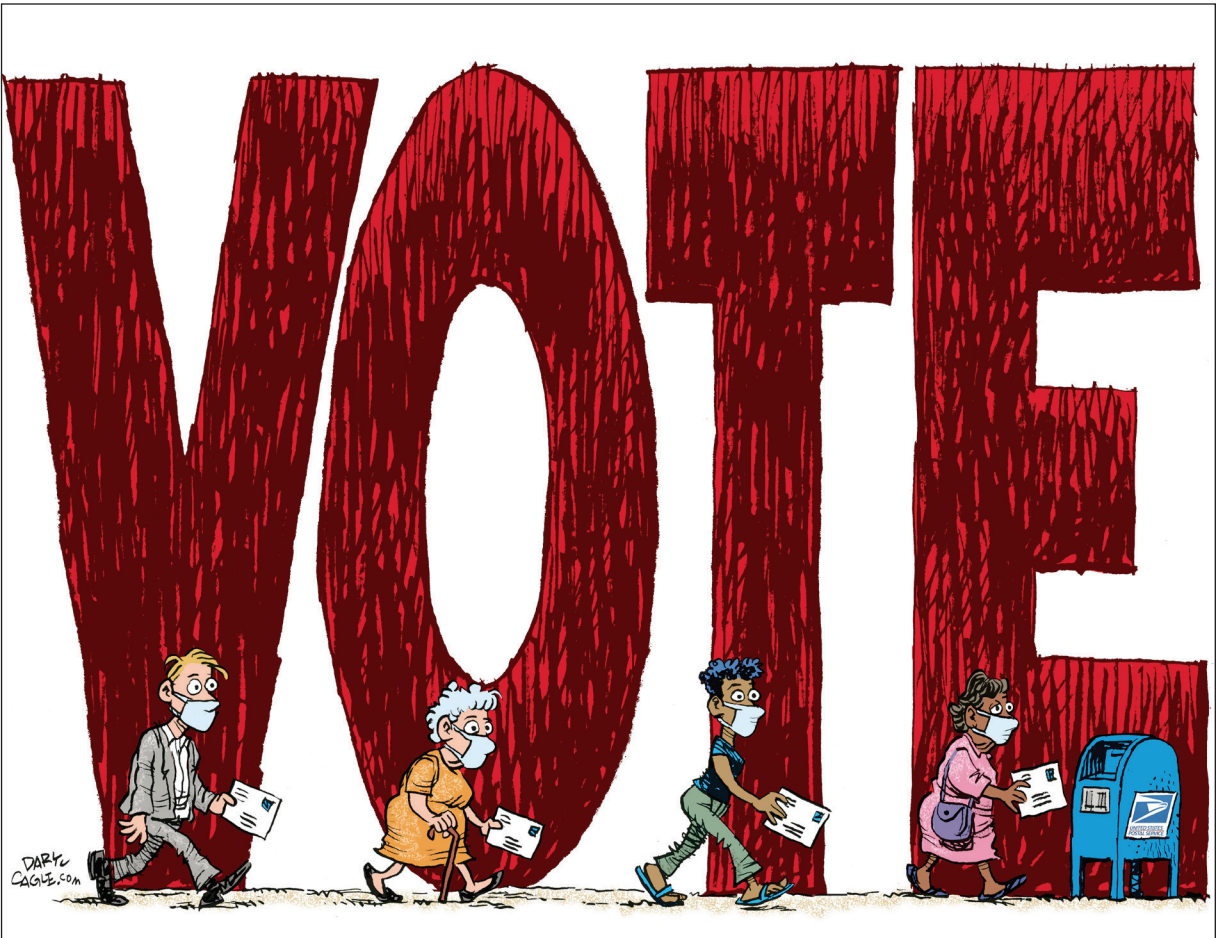
Of course, Trump is no Reagan, and Biden is not nearly as passive on his approach as Mondale.

Making informed political decisions are not as easy as they used to be. The internet and social media rely on algorithms that allow us to form echo chambers and allow others to manipulate us. It may take a cultural shift to resurrect reasoned dialogue and thoughtful debate.

That’s a shame. Democracy is built on the notion of compromise and the give-and-take of different interests fighting for supremacy. A winner-takes-all formula isn’t a functional method long term for a democracy. There’s a solid argument that Oregon’s state government is a prime example of that.

The Founders, though, appeared to believe in the ultimate reason of “the people,” and that is why voting is much more than a simple choice on a ballot. Voting is a symbol that, in the end, the average American is capable of making the right choice when necessary.

Voting is a constitutional right and an American rite, and we have an obligation to community and country to exercise that right and participate in the rite of voting. Voting also is a way we make a difference. So vote.



## Letters

### Sheriff’s office needs Bill Miller’s leadership

Nov. 3 is a very important date in our country as well as our local community. Cody Bowen is an excellent deputy and I have nothing bad to say about him. However, Bill Miller will bring back the leadership that has been lacking for the past 15-plus years in the Union County Sheriff’s Office.

Serving as the top law enforcement leader in one’s county requires experience, maturity, dedication and honesty. Bill exceeds in all of these qualities. I’ve had the opportunity to serve alongside Bill in the 23 years of experience I’ve had with the Union County Sheriff’s Office. What I have witnessed through those years show Bill will make an excellent sheriff.

Please join me and many others who I have spoken within our county in supporting and writing in Bill Miller on your ballot.

James G. Gray  
La Grande

### Denise Wheeler has my vote

I will vote for Denise Wheeler as a member of the La Grande City Council. I appreciate her interest in keeping our community’s ways of life and times intact.

Marie Lester  
Former Union County  
Commissioner  
La Grande

### Keep local government nonpartisan

As our country becomes more and more fractured by partisanship and factionalism, we in La Grande have the opportunity to put community before politics. In fact, it is for this reason that our city council elections are by design nonpartisan. The idea is that the nuts and bolts decisions made by city councilors should depend on our local needs, common sense and analysis of

facts — not on national ideology or groupthink.

Because of this, I am troubled by the approach a group of candidates for La Grande City Council are taking. These candidates, Denise Wheeler, David Glabe, Alex McHaddad and John Bozarth, are trumpeting their endorsement by the Republican Party. They are allowing surrogates on the county Republican Party’s website to describe them as “Conservative” and to label their opponents as “Liberals” or “Democrats.”

While this kind of crass politicking may (or may not) work in national elections, it won’t advance the needs of our community where we rely on each other and on straightforward solutions to common problems. Don’t be fooled by the divisive labels they seek to adopt or cast on others. Rather, take the time to look at each candidate’s accomplishments, experience and ideas and vote based on your own judgment of how that candidate can lead our community.

Max Koltuv  
La Grande

### Dutto learns and listens before making decisions

I believe Corrine Dutto is the best qualified candidate for the La Grande City Council we could have. She has volunteered continually to make La Grande a great community. She is a hard worker and is interested in listening to all sides of an issue before making a decision. She is very open-minded and has a breadth of life experience that allows her to view all sides.

Corrine has volunteered consistently in a variety of ways over the past 15 years, prior to becoming city councilor. She has volunteered in the schools helping with reading and math, at track and cross-country meets, with youth soccer and swimming. She has volunteered with the Blue Mountain Humane Association, Boy Scouts and her church.

She also served on the parks commission and the city budget committee.

I will vote for Corrine because she has fought to make sure we have a library, parks and a pool while balancing the city budget. She has learned about the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project and decided it will have many negative impacts on La Grande, such as increased fire risk and mudslides, and no positive impacts.

I support representatives who learn the issues and listen to residents before deciding on any issue as Corrine does.

Lia Spiegel  
La Grande

### Dutto’s commitment to La Grande is undeniable

Since arriving in La Grande 16 years ago, Corrine Dutto has planted deep family and community roots. Through church, scouting, school reading and athletic programs, she has demonstrated a strong commitment to volunteering. Both sons are Eagle Scouts and championship state swimmers.

Corrine’s continuing commitment to improving La Grande is shown through the endless time she has devoted to serving on the city council. During her four-year tenure, she has participated in wide-ranging accomplishments from the railroad quiet zone and changing the method urban renewal funds are analyzed and spent to implementing the city’s response to COVID-19 challenges.

She represents the city on the audit committee, the airport commission and other regional groups.

Corrine has worked tirelessly for the betterment of our citizens and community. Her civic record is strong and speaks loudly for her reelection to the La Grande City Council.

Eric Valentine  
La Grande

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