

## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, May 20, the 140th day of 2021. There are 225 days left in the year.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On May 20, 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, aboard the Spirit of St. Louis on his historic solo flight to France.

### ON THIS DATE:

In 1506, explorer Christopher Columbus died in Spain.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which was intended to encourage settlements west of the Mississippi River by making federal land available for farming.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart took off from Newfoundland to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. (Because of weather and equipment problems, Earhart set down in Northern Ireland instead of her intended destination, France.)

In 1948, Chiang Kai-shek was inaugurated as the first president of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

In 1956, the United States exploded the first airborne hydrogen bomb over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific. In 1959, nearly 5,000 Japanese-Americans had their U.S. citizenships restored after choosing to renounce them during World War II.

In 1961, a white mob attacked a busload of Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Alabama, prompting the federal government to send in U.S. marshals to restore order.

In 1985, Radio Marti, operated by the U.S. government, began broadcasting; Cuba responded by attempting to jam its signal.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton announced that the two-block stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House would be permanently closed to motor vehicles as a security measure.

In 2009, suspended NFL star Michael Vick was released after 19 months in prison for running a dog-fighting ring to begin two months' home confinement.

In 2015, four of the world's biggest banks — JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup's banking unit Citicorp, Barclays and the Royal Bank of Scotland — agreed to pay more than \$5 billion in penalties and plead guilty to rigging the currency markets.

# Union County voters pass weed control levy

## New faces to serve on three school boards

The Observer

**UNION COUNTY** — Union County voters approved a levy to control weeds and elected several new members to school boards.

Turnout in the county stands at 24.8% for the Tuesday, May 18, special elections, a return of 4,708 out of a total of 18,959 ballots, according to the unofficial results from the Oregon Secretary of State. That is in line with the turnout statewide, which was a little better than 24.6%.

The Observer covered contested races and the county's lone ballot measure. For a full list of results, see the link to election night at union-county.org.

### Union County weed control levy passes

**UNION COUNTY** — Union County voted in favor of Measure 31-104, a five-year operating levy that will collect \$230,000 for the control of noxious weeds. Unofficial results show the measure passing 2,911-1,596 (64.6%).

The operating levy will cost Union County residents 12 cents per \$1,000 of their assessed property value. Measure 31-104 renews the same operating levy that has been in place since 2016, at the same rate.

According to the Union County Weed Control website, the program's mission is to serve as stewards of Union County to



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County deputy clerks (from left) Margot Terheggen, Lisa Feik and Ramona Campbell begin counting ballots at the county clerk's office in La Grande for the special election Tuesday, May 18, 2021. The county's voter turnout was at about 25%.

protect agricultural lands, natural resources, wildlife habitats and wilderness areas from the invasion of noxious weeds. The website states that the second most leading cause of wildlife habitat loss can be attributed to noxious weed infestation.

Measure 31-104 targets weeds such as puncture vine, which is known to deflate tires and harm humans, pets and livestock. Some weeds treated by the program are specifically dangerous to horses and cattle, such as leafy spurge, tansy ragwort, poison hemlock and hound's tongue.

The weed treatment program treats upward of 5,300 acres for noxious weeds each year. The funds collected since 2016 also led to the hire of a full-time county weed supervisor, Brian Clapp.

For more information on Union County Weed Control, visit unioncounty-weedcontrol.org.

### Fisher wins, Beck leads in race for Imbler School Board

**IMBLER** — Joseph "Joe" Fisher is taking a seat on the Imbler School Board, and Jason Beck is in the lead to join him. Both races tightened as the night wore on.

"I'm just glad for the support from the community," Fisher said the morning of May 18.

According to unofficial election results from Union County, Fisher has 42.4% of the vote, or 157 votes, in the race for Position 3 on the board. Tim Phelps is in second, with 37.8%, or 140 votes, and Bud Whitcomb is in third,

with 19.5%, or 72 votes.

Jason Beck is on his way to winning the Position 5 seat on the board, leading with 53.5% of the votes, or 205, to Lavar Bowles, who has 46.2%, or 177 votes.

### Thew wins in Cove School Board race

**COVE** — Chris Thew ousted long-term incumbent Andy Lindsey in the race for Position 1 on the Cove School District Board of Directors.

"I'm excited and looking forward to getting in there and seeing how I can help," Thew said May 18.

According to unofficial Union County results, Thew leads 218-133, having garnered 62.1% of the vote to Lindsey's 37.9%.

Thew, the athletic head trainer at Eastern Oregon University, told The

## LOCAL ELECTIONS 2021

Observer previously he wanted to keep the schools his children attend strong and athletic.

### Shaw wins bid for reelection

**LA GRANDE** — Incumbent Randy Shaw will be returning to the La Grande School Board to serve a second consecutive four-year term.

Shaw defeated challenger Elijah Romer 1,691-673 for Position 4 on the La Grande School Board, according to unofficial Union County results.

"I am extremely happy to be able to serve another four years with this great district," Shaw said.

Shaw, an auto body mechanic, said he ran for reelection because he wants to help the school district finish a number of projects that were beginning when he joined the board in 2016. These include the expansion of the district's career technical educational program. Money from a \$31.5 million bond local voters approved in 2014 built new facilities for the program.

The incumbent said he is pleased with the direction the district is moving. He told The Observer earlier that the La Grande High School's graduation rate of 89.4% is an indication of how well the school district is doing at all grade levels.

Position 4 is in Zone 3, which is open to candidates living within the city limits of La Grande.

# Merkley favors end to alcohol shipping ban

## Senator comments on dam breaching and wildfire management at town hall session

By DICK MASON

The Observer

**LA GRANDE** — U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon said his home state would benefit from passage of the bipartisan bill to end the Prohibition-era ban that prevents the U.S. Postal Service from shipping alcoholic beverages to consumers.

Merkley addressed the issue Tuesday, May 18, in an interview with The Observer before his online town hall for Union County. He said the USPS Shipping Equity Act would benefit Oregon.

"It would help make our wine industry more vibrant," he said.

The legislation would

provide wine producers with another shipping option. Private shipping companies do not serve all rural areas of the United States, Merkley said in a press release.

Similar legislation was introduced in Congress about six years ago but was not enacted. Merkley said today's legislation has a better chance of passage because wine production is increasing in a number of states.

Critics say the USPS Shipping Equity Act would boost underage drinking. Merkley stressed the legislation would require adults to sign for all shipments of alcohol the U.S. Postal

Service delivers.

Merkley spoke in neutral terms about the proposal to remove four dams on the lower Snake River. U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, has introduced the proposal to breach the dams by 2030 to improve salmon runs.

Merkley noted the dams deliver significant benefits in electricity, irrigation water and shipping opportunities.

"Changing all this would not be a small process," said Merkley, who intends to take a deep look at the dam breaching legislation.

The senator also spoke about his new role as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Merkley is now the chair of the Appropria-

tions Committee's subcommittee, which funds the Department of the Interior. He said this gives him more influence in determining how much funding the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management receive. The senator said he is working to get additional funding to these agencies for forest thinning and the removal of shrubbery in forests to reduce their fuel loads. This will reduce the likelihood of more major regional wildfires in the future.

"I want to make our forests fire resistant," Merkley said.

The senator said he would prefer spending money upfront to prevent fires rather than on the back end trying to extinguish them.

# \$4 million bond passing in Baker School District

Baker City Herald

**BAKER COUNTY** — Baker School District voters appear to be approving a \$4 million bond for school improvements. In unofficial results from the Baker County Clerk's Office, the measure had 2,401 yes votes and 2,219 no votes.

Voters haven't approved a bond measure for the school district since 1948.

The district would add the \$4 million from the levy to a \$4 million state grant and \$4 million from the district's capital budget for a total \$12 million project. The money would pay to replace heating, cooling and ventilation systems in all schools, as well as upgrade security systems. The district would also build a cafeteria/kitchen at Baker Middle School, the

only school that lacks such a facility.

In the one contested race for the Baker School Board, Jessica Dougherty has 1,760 votes to Koby Myer's 1,669 votes.

In Halfway, voters deciding whether to allow marijuana businesses within the city limits are rejecting the measure, with 83 no votes and 36 yes votes.

In a countywide measure, a strong majority voted to require Baker County commissioners to meet three times per year to discuss a proposal to include 18 Oregon counties, including Baker, as part of Idaho. For the state border to actually move, however, would require the approval of both the Oregon and Idaho legislatures.

# Six first responders now certified to intervene in mental crises

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

**ENTERPRISE** — Six first responders were certified Friday, May 14, after a weeklong training session to help law enforcement officers and others dealing with the mentally ill, drug or alcohol afflicted and aging communities, according to a press release.

"The information, tools and resources presented are designed to enhance first responder response and reduce the overall risk of injury or death," the release stated.

Certified in the Crisis Intervention Team training were officer Jacob Curtis of the Enterprise Police Department; deputy Austin Violette of the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office; deputy Jennifer Harmon of the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office; deputy Anthony Scott of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office; Josiah Bates, a Wallowa Mountain Medical Clinic nursing student; and Sandra Gore, a Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness therapist.

Brandon Miller, a mental health clinician



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Brandon Miller, left, a mental health clinician for the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness, handed out certificates of completion to six first responders from Northeastern Oregon sheriff's offices and mental health providers who completed Crisis Intervention Team training Friday, May 14, 2021.

for the Center for Wellness who hosted some of the training, held a review of the 40 hours of instruction on specific topics with a CIT version of the game show "Jeopardy." Categories in the game included Suicide, Mental Health First Aid, Tactical Communication, Crisis, Acronyms and Psychosis. Topics covered during the week's training included medication time, crisis cycle, "Sad, Bad, Mad," mental illness in the elderly, seniors presenta-

tion, post-traumatic stress disorder/battlemind, family presentation, psychosis and mood disorders, personality disorders, treatment of psychiatric illnesses, synthetic substances, excited delirium, addictive diseases, voices presentation, legal panel, liability and use of force, developmental disabilities, de-escalation techniques, National Alliance on Mental Illness/own voice, child and adolescent crisis, suicide prevention, suicide by cop and self-

care and scenario-based training.

Enterprise Police Chief Kevin McQuead, who has taken the training several times, said the CIT training isn't a one-time event, since the parameters of the training change, as do officers' understanding of it based on their experience and occasions they have had to apply the training.

He said a major goal is to get a person suffering from mental health issues the help they need and to

do it in a manner that is as peaceful as possible. Miller said it's always preferable when mental health care is needed that a patient seeks that care voluntarily rather than having it forced upon them.

Each crisis intervention training class varies in length and is taught by instructors locally and from around the state.

Ridg Medford, one of the instructors from the Oregon Center on Behavioral Health and Justice Integration, also emphasized to the trainees that they could become victims to some of the issues they're intended to address.

"When you get home, you need to take off your vest, take off your badge and step away from it," he said.

### Nationwide connection through CIT

CIT programs create connections in more than 2,700 communities nationwide among law enforcement, mental health providers, hospital emergency services and individuals with mental illness and

their families. Through collaborative community partnerships and intensive training, according to the release, CIT improves communication, identifies mental health resources for those in crisis and ensures officer and community safety.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in law enforcement officers serving as first responders to most crises. A CIT program is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes of these encounters, the release stated.

CIT Training objectives include:

- Providing information and resources to law enforcement personnel who find themselves handling calls involving emotionally disturbed individuals.

- Increasing the ability of law enforcement to successfully manage an emotionally disturbed individual.

- Reducing the number of inappropriate incarcerations involving people with mental illness.