

**COURT**

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“I’m always for more local control,” she said.  
 In a statement, the Union County Democratic Party said the decision leaves millions of American women without abortion as a viable alternative.  
 “The decision to have an abortion is one that should be made by the individual and the individual alone — not by judges, not by MAGA politicians and not by your ability to pay or the ZIP code you live in,” the Union County Democratic Party statement said.  
 The statement went on to say that everyone — members of Congress, medical professionals, advocates and voters — should stand up against this “nightmare vision” of people forced to carry pregnancies to term against their will.  
 “Let’s be clear on one thing — SCOTUS did not prevent abortions through their archaic ruling. They simply pushed America back into the dark ages of women’s rights,” the Democratic statement said.

Union County Commissioner Paul Anderes said the decision changes the political dynamics of the abortion issue.  
 “It affects the people of our county but it is not a county-specific issue. It is a state and federal issue now,” he said.  
 Anderes said that the decision will not put the abortion issue to rest.  
 “I think there will be suits and countersuits for a long time,” he said.

The elimination of the constitutional right is a landmark decision but its impact in Oregon will be negligible as the right to terminate a pregnancy has been protected under the state constitution since 1983.  
 Oregon became the first state to codify abortion rights in law in 2017. The Reproductive Health Equity Act of 2017 requires insurance companies to cover abortion costs, among other things, and guarantees the state will cover costs for people on Medicaid or who are uninsured, including those without legal documentation to reside in the U.S. A federal law, the Hyde Amendment, prevents federal money from being used to pay for abortions.

**CASCADIA**

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to her real life experiences with its staff.  
 Union County joined Baker, Umatilla and Harney counties in participating in the Cascadia earthquake response simulation on June 27 and June 28. The exercise tested communications, lines of succession, priority assessments such as debris removal, roadway damages, response times and fuel distribution issues the counties would face in the event of a major earthquake.

LaRochelle learned of the fictitious GRH water pressure problem not from a script but from a phone call from a simulated cellphone call center in Pendleton. There people portraying individuals with firsthand information about the status of Union, Baker, Harney and Umatilla counties following the hypothetical earthquake made calls to update those participating in the exercise.  
 “The sim cell callers enhanced a sense of realism and authenticity,” said Annette Powers, of Union County Emergency Services.

Those participating in the Union County portion of the exercise included representatives of Grande Ronde Hospital, American Red Cross, city of La Grande, La Grande Rural Fire Department, Union County, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, Ziplly Fiber, Avista Utilities, Federal Emergency Management Association, Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Center for Human Development and Oregon Department of Emergency Management.



Dick Mason/The Observer  
**Carrie Brogoitti, left, Nick Vora, center, and Craig Kretschmer on Monday, June 27, 2022, take part in a multi-county Cascadia earthquake response exercise at the Union County law enforcement building, La Grande. Kretschmer is chief of the La Grande Rural Fire Department, Vora is the emergency manager for Union County and Brogoitti is the public health administrator for the Center for Human Development.**

The representatives of these agencies worked together to address in real time hypothetical emergency situations an earthquake could create. Powers said one of the objectives of the exercise was to get members of organizations that would likely have to work together in the event of an earthquake to get to know one another and learn how their agencies could help one another. She noted that people who have already developed professional relationships are able to work more efficiently in an emergency.

LaRochelle said the Cascadia earthquake exercise “cemented” already existing working relationships among local agency representatives.

The participants received sim cell calls about not only falling water pressure but also road-closing mudslides, broken natural gas lines, fallen electrical lines,

and supply and food shortages.

In the event of a natural disaster such as the Cascadia earthquake, shortages of essential items could be caused by road closures preventing truck shipments from getting here. Powers said the issue of food shortages was addressed by arranging for the Oregon Department of Transportation to clear roadways for trucks and to do other things to help them transport their food into towns.

Also addressed at the earthquake simulation was the potential for fuel shortages. The delivery of gasoline and diesel also could be affected by closed roads. LaRochelle said fuel shortages could be particularly impactful after an earthquake because there is a good chance that power lines will be down, forcing many to rely on diesel generators for their power. LaRochelle said she believes

**WHAT IS THE CASCADIA EARTHQUAKE?**

The potential Cascadia earthquake is based on the Cascadia subduction zone, a 600-mile fault that runs from Northern California up to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and is about 70-100 miles off the Pacific coast shoreline. Subduction zone earthquakes can exceed a magnitude of 9.0. While Northeastern Oregon is located far from the center of the subduction zone, the Cascadia earthquake could cause extreme shaking in the region for several minutes that would affect buildings, utilities and transportation.

this problem could be addressed by the many generous farmers in Union County who have large quantities of fuel stored they would likely share with others.

“The people in this valley are just plain generous,” she said. “I know that people would step up.”  
 Union County’s resources could be taxed even if the roads leading into it were not closed. Powers noted that if an earthquake hit the Portland area hard it could trigger a mass exodus of people to Northeastern Oregon. Then the question would be if Union County had the resources to meet the needs of the potentially thousands of evacuees who would come here.

Powers said representatives of the American Red Cross addressed this issue during the Cascadia exercise by making plans to get public sheltering facilities in place.

LaRochelle, who was not able to attend the June 28 session of the regional exercise, said people with federal agencies at the June 27 simulation were impressed with how it went.

“They said, ‘You guys just rolled,’” LaRochelle said.

**FOOD**

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food distribution center in Island City. So far, local donation levels have not changed.

**Across Oregon**

This trend also has been seen across the state.

“We are in a historic high for hunger in Oregon,” Morgan said.

The pandemic increased the number of people experiencing hunger in the state. In 2019 — prior to the pandemic — 860,000 people in Oregon and Southwestern Washington asked for food at least once during the year, according to Morgan. This number nearly doubled for 2020 — 1.7 million people — and remained high in 2021 — 1.2 million people. At the start of 2022, the number of people needing food assistance seemed

to be continuing the downward trend, but recently that has turned around and the number is once more climbing.

**Impact on Oregon Food Bank**

The rising costs of food and fuel have also directly impacted the Oregon Food Bank. According to Morgan, fuel costs are up 30% and freight costs are up 16% since December. On average, the food bank is paying 12% more

for food purchases to keep up with demand.

“As a concrete example, pre-pandemic a truckload of peanut butter cost about \$34,000. That same truck load today is well over \$40,000,” she said.

This trend has been seen throughout the nation, but so far Oregon has been able to meet the need with existing food assistance sites and supplies.

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