

IN BRIEF

One person injured in Gearhart fire

GEARHART — A fire in Gearhart early Monday resulted in a burn injury as flames reached more than 200-feet high and torched trees.

Fire officials said they received a call at 4 a.m. on Monday about a structure fire in the area of Katie Court. The first crews to arrive called for additional assistance after finding two structures fully involved.

It took about 30 minutes to bring the fire under control, James Hutchinson, the Gearhart Fire Department's interim training officer, said.

Crews left the residence 11 hours after the fire was out.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

The person who was injured received burns to their foot, Hutchinson said.

The American Red Cross was called to assist with displaced residents.

— *The Astorian*

Pacific County hits 20 coronavirus deaths

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Cases of COVID-19 continued to swarm through Pacific County communities, as the past week brought more death and severe illness to local residents of all ages.

According to the Pacific County Health and Human Services Department, another 75 cases, eight hospitalizations and two deaths were reported over the previous week as of Monday. The deaths were the 19th and 20th due to complications from the virus that the county has recorded since the pandemic began. The two deaths involving individuals in their 70s and 90s, with the most recent death before that being in their 20s.

Of at least eight new hospitalizations being reported in the county in the past week, the patients severely struggling with the virus cut through generations. All told, 70 county residents have now been hospitalized because of coronavirus complications since the pandemic began.

The total number of cases recorded in the county since the pandemic began sat at 1,496 as of Monday.

The number of cases, which continues to rise higher and higher, is a staggering figure that few likely thought was possible in the earliest months of the pandemic, when Pacific County was largely spared from the sickness and death that the country as a whole was experiencing. The 20 deaths in the county outpace the 13 deaths reported so far in neighboring Clatsop County, which has a population nearly twice as large.

County health director Katie Lindstrom said the county's two small hospitals continue to have trouble being able to expeditiously transfer hospitalized COVID-19 patients to out-of-county hospitals to receive more specialized care.

— *Chinook Observer*



Petty Officer 3rd Class Diolanda Caballero

The U.S. Coast Guard conducted a law enforcement training exercise in late August at the mouth of the Columbia River.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES



More than a dozen people protested coronavirus vaccine and mask mandates outside of Carruthers in Astoria on Tuesday evening. The restaurant announced via Facebook in August that it would require customers to show proof of vaccination against the virus.

Hailey Hoffman/
The Astorian

DEATHS

Sept. 1, 2021

BENTHIEN, Linnea Carol, 78, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 31, 2021

NIEMI, Lisbet Ulrika, 77, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's

Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 28, 2021

KATON, Philip Dean, 41, of Clatskanie, previously of Astoria, died in Vancouver, Washington. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIALS

Sunday, Sept. 12, 2021

KATON, Philip Dean — A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. on Sept. 12 at the Clatskanie High School football field, located at the end of S.W. Canyon Road in Clatskanie. There will be

time for people to speak if they wish or they can provide a statement to the pastor before the service and he will read it aloud. Those wishing to send memorial flowers can send them to the football field on the day of the service by 1 p.m.

ON THE RECORD

Burglary

• Cyrus Galen Grabenhorst, 27, of Astoria, was arrested on Monday evening for burglary in the second degree and two counts of tampering with physical evidence. He allegedly stole a safe from The Sea Crab House in Astoria earlier that day,

left his residence during an execution of a search warrant and was arrested at Safeway.

Reckless driving

• Anthony Le Hoang, 30, of Seattle, was arrested at Marine Drive and 17th Street in Astoria on Sunday morning for reckless driving.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Clatsop County Human Services Advisory Council, 3 p.m., (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

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Wyden pushing his agenda as election clock ticks

Senator hopes to extend majority

By GARY WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

EUGENE — As a former college basketball player, Ron Wyden knows all about shot clocks.

In basketball, the clocks hang above the backboard on each side, showing players how much of the 24 seconds remain between taking possession of the ball and trying to score.

Democrats are facing a shot clock now: 14 months and ticking. That's the time of possession remaining of assured Democratic control of the White House, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House before the November 2022 elections.

During a masked and socially distanced interview Monday on the patio of a bakery, Wyden argued against letting clocks rule Congress.

"I am a contrarian on the idea that you can only do legislation in odd-numbered years because elections are in even-numbered years," the Oregon Democrat said. "The best politics is to do good policy that helps people."

Wyden is well aware of the tenuous nature of Democrats' majority, a status that includes his moving into the chair of the Senate Finance Committee, where much federal spending flows.

Democrats came out of the 2020 elections with President Joe Biden and a fragile trifecta of government control.

History shows that the party of a new president loses seats — often dozens — in the House in the first midterm election. All 435 seats — including a new sixth one in Oregon — will be on the 2022 ballot. Only twice has the new party held or added to its majority: Democrats in 1934 amid the Depression and Republicans in 2002 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Senate, with its staggered six-year terms, is harder to predict, but overall history favors a turnover to the GOP.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, shown here on the North Coast last year, is up for reelection in 2022.

'You need 51 votes'

In the 40 years since he arrived in Washington, D.C., as a 31-year-old freshman congressman from Portland, Wyden has learned that over time, you'll likely be on legislative offense with the majority or defense with the minority.

When he arrived in 1981, Republicans were on the rise. Ronald Reagan had just been elected president in a landslide, while Oregon's governor and two senators were both Republicans.

In Oregon today, the governor and both senators — along with four of five U.S. House members — are Democrats.

In his 25 years in the Senate, Wyden has spent most of the time outside looking in — with 10 years in the majority and 15 in the minority. In the House, he was in the majority 14 out of 15 years. But the basic math remains the same.

Regardless of the partisan breakdown of membership, the most important number doesn't change in the 100-member Senate.

"You need 51 votes," Wyden said.

That coalition can be put together in different ways. He's co-sponsoring legislation with U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, on mental health care reform. Crapo was chair of the Senate Finance Committee when the GOP held the Senate until early January. He's worked with U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, over the years.

But he's also ready, when needed, to push legislation through the tight partisan squeeze, as he did early this year when he guided President Biden's \$1.3 trillion coronavirus relief package through the committee and onto the floor for passage on a party-line 50-49 vote.

He's taking his legislative shots at a rapid-fire pace. On Tuesday, he held a virtual town hall to promote a bill he co-sponsored, The River Democracy Act, which would designate about 4,700 miles of wild and scenic rivers for additional federal protection.

He's been in central Oregon to tout the state's portion of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill passed by the Senate in August. The bill would pump billions of dollars into Oregon highways, water, electrical, internet access and educational projects, as well as fund more aggressive action against drought and wildfire.

Wyden has introduced legislation to protect domestic abuse victims from future intimidation by gun violence, and fund affordable housing rent vouchers.

A bill would streamline federal drug laws so that legal marijuana businesses could have access to banking and credit. Other issues include making court records free of charge, pushing for insurance companies to pay for fans and air-conditioners under a federal Medicaid program and allowing tax credits to sustain

local newspapers.

'Voters get the last word'

Wyden plans to keep going as long as there is a window to get laws passed.

"My big three priorities now are child care, affordable housing and prescription drug prices," Wyden said.

They are part of what he termed the "human infrastructure" support that he says is just as important as concrete for highways or stronger wire for electricity.

Republicans were wrong about the aid package proposed by Biden because the math facing Oregon residents is not just about a paycheck, Wyden said. Part of the decision of whether to take a job is the ability to have affordable child care while you are working and to be able to afford to rent or even buy a home for your family. He believes too much money is spent on a dizzying array of prescription drug programs and prices that always put the consumer at the disadvantage.

"The top of the 1% have to pay their fair share," Wyden said. "You ask people if the wealthiest are paying their fair share, they are going to say 'no.'"

Though it's been just over seven months since the new Congress was convened, the window to file to run for the 2022 election is already opening — it's Sept. 9 in Oregon. Wyden said he will be on the ballot, seeking a fifth full term. Prineville Mayor Jason Beebe is among the candidates who've said they plan to file to run in the Republican primary to face Wyden.

It's a seemingly uphill task to topple Wyden, who has never received less than 55% of the vote in his Senate races. But he also recalls that when he was elected to the Senate in a 1996 special election, no Democrat had won a Senate seat in Oregon since 1962.

"Voters get the last word," he said.

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