

# Richardson ends speculation he will run for governor

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Secretary of State Dennis Richardson confirmed Wednesday that he will not seek the Republican nomination for governor in 2018.

Despite having raised no campaign funds, Richardson drew political speculation that he might seek the state's highest office, building on momentum from 2016 when he became the first Republican to win statewide office since 2002.

"I am serious about being the best secretary of state I can be and keeping my promise to voters to provide transparency and accountability and restore trust in government, and that is where my focus is," Richardson said in a phone interview with Pamplin Media/EO Media Group Capital Bureau Wednesday.

By putting the rumors to rest, Richardson opens the way for other Republican candidates to consolidate support. The campaign for Rep. Knute Buehler, a moderate Republican from Bend who declared his bid for governor Aug. 2, declined comment on Richardson's announcement. Republican Happy Valley Mayor Lori



Secretary of State Dennis Richardson said Wednesday that he won't seek the Republican nomination for governor in 2018.

Chavez-DeRemer has said she also may challenge incumbent Democrat Gov. Kate Brown.

DeRemer said she is focused on making the "best decision for the people, the investors and the state as a whole" on whether to enter the race.

"No announcement about who is or isn't running takes us off our overall strategy," she said.

Brown has been fundraising and campaigning since shortly after her election in November but has yet to officially announce a reelection bid. Her campaign

did not immediately respond Wednesday to requests for comment.

Richardson, a former lawmaker from Central Point, lost a challenge to former Gov. John Kitzhaber in 2014. Kitzhaber stepped down as governor less than four months later in the midst of an influence-peddling scandal involving him and First Lady Sylvia Hayes. A federal investigation of the couple ended without charges, but the former governor and first lady remain under investigation by the Oregon Ethics Commission.

# TAXES: District working to see if they can spread the increased payments out

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during a meeting with auditors, but that it's unclear exactly what led to the mistake and when it was caught. According to school board meeting minutes, Kris James, the district's current business manager, said that auditors gave the district a "good report with few findings" as recently as February.

Liscom and James put the blame on a previous business manager.

"It's hard to know what the last person was thinking," said Liscom, who was hired as the district's superintendent in 2014.

Neither Liscom nor James would reveal the name of the business manager at the time the bond was passed or when the error was discovered, but the *East Oregonian* archive and previous audits show Leeann ReMillard held the position for at least 12 years, until her retirement in 2016.

James, who is starting her second year as Stanfield School District's business manager, said the issue came to light this year, while auditing the 2015-2016 school year. James said Pendleton-based Cockburn and McClintock brought the error to the attention of James, Liscom, and two school board members.

"They said they found there was not enough tax dollars being levied to adequately cover the bond payments," said James.

She also said this was not the first time the firm had brought the disparity up to the district.

"They brought it to the previous business manager at least two times in the past," James said. "They suggested how to correct it, and it was up to the person to make those changes. That was not done."

James said that to her knowledge, auditors only told this information to the

business manager, and not to the superintendent or anyone else in the district.

"I think they trusted that the business manager would bring that information to the superintendent," she said.

Chalmers said Stanfield taxpayers have been paying about \$1.28 per \$1,000 in assessed value. After the increase, they will be paying about twice that much — \$2.56 per \$1,000 in value. According to U.S. Census Data from 2010, Stanfield's average home price is \$110,000. That means that according to Chalmers' numbers, the average homeowner will be paying roughly \$281 for the bond next fiscal year.

Some aspects of the property tax adjustment are still up in the air. Liscom said on Wednesday the district was working with Chalmers and with auditors to see if they can spread the increased payments out, instead of making taxpayers fork up the missing funds all at once. She said the district may have more information about readjusting the payments later this week.

Stanfield resident David Olson said he had been researching the issue since he received the flyer last week. He initially thought the notice was a scam.

"There was no address, no phone number, nothing," he said. "It wasn't on official letterhead."

He said he contacted Chalmers, who told him the information was legit. But Olson is still concerned procedure was not followed.

"There was no amount, no information whatsoever," he said. "Just the idea of a small community like this — it's not the right avenue."

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or [jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com).



Dr. Dave Drotzmann discusses the results of a retinal scan with Abbie Ditton of Hermiston during a routine eye exam Wednesday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

# EYES: Make an appointment if you experience spots in vision

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burned a hole in the person's retina, "like a magnifying glass burning a hole in a leaf." Doctors have yet to come up with a way to regrow that tissue, meaning there is no cure for the condition, called solar retinopathy. Some patients have reported that the damage eventually healed itself, but others, like Portland man Louis Tomoski, warned that their full eyesight never did return after watching a solar eclipse with the naked eye decades ago.

Drotzmann said his office has yet to see a patient complaining that the eclipse damaged their vision, but he had noticed that other optometrists across the country were writing on online message boards that they were seeing patients with damage.

Thankfully, he said, technology and awareness have increased since the country's last total solar eclipse. He

said many people probably heeded warnings in the media and purchased special mylar glasses when decades ago they might have just stared at the sun without protection.

The advocacy group Prevent Blindness posted tips about eclipse-related eye damage online prior to the event, and cautioned that people should make an appointment with an eye care professional if they experienced spots in their vision, changes in how they see colors or other distortions.

President Donald Trump caused a stir Monday when a photo from the Associated Press showed him looking directly up at the sun for a moment after taking off his eclipse glasses. The White House has not reported any negative effects on the president's vision.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

# MURRAY: 'In 59 years, we've filled about three million prescriptions'

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they said, is that insurance companies will give their customers an incentive to use mail order pharmacies, offering a discount on some prescriptions.

But Ann pointed out that this practice drives out small, local pharmacies who can't compete on a national scale — which poses a problem for everyone.

"They want people to be able to order antibiotics (at local pharmacies), because they need those immediately," she said.

Privately-owned pharmacies also face competition from local businesses with government backing. This week, the Murrays had to shelve plans to open a pharmacy in Boardman, which they'd been working on for the last several months.

The Murrays had been in the process of purchasing a building in Boardman, and had almost completed the purchase of the business they hoped to take over — Good Shepherd Pharmacy — when they were forced to reconsider their plans. Columbia River Community Health Services, which operates a clinic in Boardman, announced plans this week to open a pharmacy in October in the same town.

"It is not financially feasible to have a second pharmacy in Boardman, as the prescription volume is not high enough to support two, and it is too difficult for a private company to compete against one with government money available to it," John said in a statement about the decision to not open the Boardman business.

Incidents like that highlight the challenges small, rural family businesses face in trying to level the playing field. For many, it's too hard to fight the bigger businesses that want to open up in small towns.

"We get sent letters (from groups

## Murray Drugs Inc. cancels plans for Boardman pharmacy

East Oregonian

The Murray family of Boardman will not open a pharmacy October 1 in Boardman, as they had been planning to do.

They have halted all plans for their third family pharmacy in Eastern Oregon, after learning that the directors of a clinic in Boardman — Columbia River Community Health Services — voted over the weekend to open their own pharmacy.

"We were blindsided by the news this far into the project," said John and Ann Murray in a written statement. "We have worked for the past four months in open communication and good faith to purchase the Good Shepherd Clinic Pharmacy, and move it to the vacant former bank building on Main Street in order to provide a convenient drive-thru window option for Boardman residents."

Seth Whitmer, the CEO of CRCH, said the pharmacy will be open some time in October and they are still working out specific details. He said the business

wanting) to buy the pharmacy," John said. "About every two weeks. I fear they just want the files but don't want to operate it. So we've always resisted, and we'll continue to do so."

In doing so, they depend on a network of loyal customers — who are equally reliant on them.

"I calculated. In 59 years, we've filled about three million prescriptions," John said.

They also deliver twice a week from their Condon store to Fossil, dropping prescriptions off at a medical clinic.

One of the key reasons for their success, John said, is their connection to the community.

"If you don't treat people right, a small community won't tolerate that," he said. "We have to fight, but we also serve. When you're serving your friends, you treat everyone like family."

### Family business

The family atmosphere extends

will be located inside the Select Market grocery store, where the Good Shepherd pharmacy currently operates.

Whitmer said they had no plans at this time to take over the inventory or files from Good Shepherd. Whitmer said he couldn't comment on the timing of their decision to open a pharmacy coinciding with the Murray family's plans, but said the organization had been discussing opening a pharmacy.

"We had lots of discussions about how to take care of patients, and be a good medical home," he said. "We needed to have a pharmacy."

The Murrays expressed their disappointment at the last-minute change, and said it would not be financially feasible to run a privately-owned pharmacy in Boardman in direct competition with CRCH, which receives federal funding.

The Columbia River Community Health clinic is a Federally Qualified Health Center, which employs two certified physician's assistants and two family nurse practitioners.

behind the counter too — quite literally. The Murrays have been pleased that three of their five children decided to follow them into the business, though they didn't plan it that way.

"We didn't encourage our kids to become pharmacists," said John. "In fact, we did the opposite."

He noted that they required their children to work somewhere else before deciding they wanted to come back to the family business.

"But it's an opportunity that's kind of hard to pass up," he said. "A community pharmacy in a store like this is one of the most desirable work environments for a pharmacist. We have challenges throughout the day, but when we come home, we're not stressed out or burned out."

Their son, Sean, agrees. Currently at a pharmacy in Enterprise, he has absorbed much of their enthusiasm for the work.

"If you don't care about what

you're doing as a pharmacist, you're not going to be good at it," he said. "Letting me choose to be a pharmacist was the biggest thing they did."

He noted that growing up, he got to see all sides of the business. "I saw them go in on weekends, stay open after hours to get things people needed because there were no other options."

He noted that the industry has become increasingly profit-driven, which puts extra strain on the small pharmacies.

"It's challenging, what goes on behind the scenes," he said.

But business pressures have not diminished his desire to go back to his roots.

"I'm looking forward to coming back," he said. "I don't want to work in a chain."

### A changing industry

The Murrays have also had to stay up-to-date on the rapid changes in the pharmaceutical industry.

"Pharmacists take a more active role in prescribing and management for patrons now," John said.

They communicate with doctors, and keep themselves informed by attending trade shows and continuing education classes. Ann is a former board member of the Oregon State Pharmacy Association. They also rely on their children's expertise.

"Our kids are very connected," she said. "Our degree (took) five years, but now they have to get an eight-year doctorate."

They recently leased out the coffeeshop in the store, Breaking Grounds, so they could focus on the pharmacy.

They've also seen a turn toward more preventive care instead of reactive measures.

"It's more clinical services, and less dispensing," said Ann. "Managing medication can save everyone money. If you mismanage, you can end up in the hospital."

They also have to keep up with the trends in pharmacy if they want to survive.

"We try not to be reactionary to trends, but a lot of the time, it's out of our control," John said.

"It's good to ask questions, and know what people are taking," Ann said.

John acknowledged that as technology gets more advanced, they may face more difficulties.

"The medications that are coming out are high-tech," he said. "They're going to be bio-engineering for individual prescriptions shortly."

But John said they will continue to stick with what's worked well for them for the last six decades.

"A drugstore, if run carefully, will always be around."

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at [jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4534