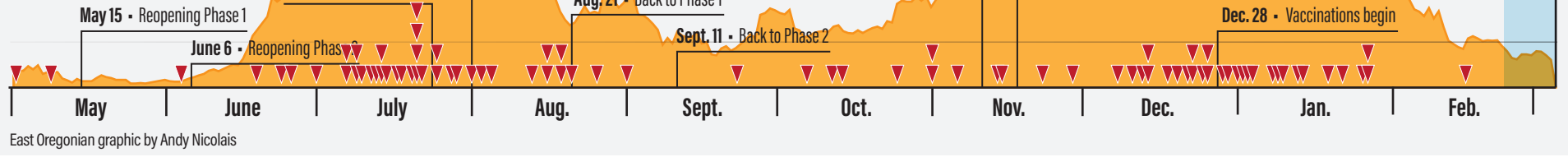


**UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF MARCH 12**

Umatilla County cases: **7,748** (42 new cases this week)  
 Umatilla County deaths: **82** (0 new deaths reported this week)  
 Oregon cases: **159,037** (2,153 new cases this week)  
 Oregon deaths: **2,319** (26 new deaths reported this week)

Umatilla County vaccinations: **4,966** in progress, **6,267** complete (as of 12:01 a.m. 3/12/2021)

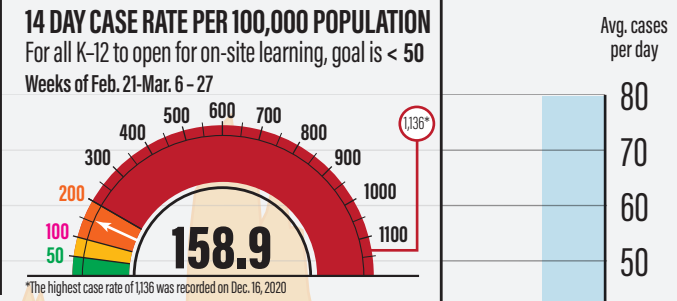
**LEGEND**  
 7 DAY AVERAGE DEATHS LAST 10 DAYS\*  
\*Cases in this time period may not yet be reported  
 SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, UMATILLA COUNTY HEALTH



**TEST POSITIVITY RATE**  
 For all K-12 to open for on-site learning, goal is < 5%  
 (Number of positive tests divided by number of people tested)

Time Period	Umatilla County	Oregon
Feb. 21-Mar. 6	5.1%	3.2%
Feb. 14 - 27	7.7%	3.9%
Feb. 7 - 20	9.8%	4.1%

Source: Oregon Health Authority. Percentages may change week to week as data is updated.



# New councilor hopes to uphold legacy

**Milton-Freewater council appoints Damien Reino to fill vacancy left when Verl Pressnall died Oct. 14, 2020**

By SHEILA HAGAR  
 Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Damien Reino is well aware he will have to make his mark as the city's newest council member through dedication and work. Reino was appointed on Monday, March 8, to fill the vacancy left when Verl Pressnall died Oct. 14, 2020, while he was running unopposed for reelection to his at-large city council position. In its first in-person

meeting for nearly a year, city council met with Reino and another applicant, Wes Koklich, at the Milton-Freewater Community Building. Council member Ed Chesnut said in February's meeting he was too "old fashioned" to consider helping choose Pressnall's replacement via a Zoom meeting. Appointment now in hand, Reino is ready to start representing his soon-to-be constituents, he said on Tuesday, March 9. With a background that includes military service and law enforcement, teaching adult basic education and serving on a diversity advisory council, Reino, 41, feels up to a new challenge. After moving his family here four years ago to take advantage of lower home



Sheila Hagar/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin  
**Outside his 1916 home in North Milton-Freewater, newly appointed city council member Damien Reino discussed home renovations and hopes for his family and chosen community on Tuesday, March 9, 2021.**

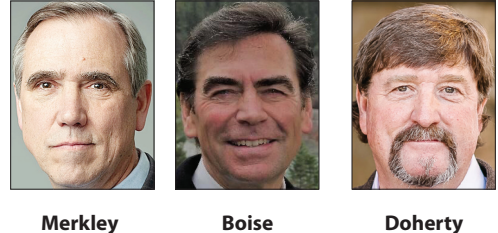
prices, Reino fell in love with the community. The small-town friendliness is apparent when he and his family walk into any store. He likes that teachers here generally have smaller class sizes and local recreation opportunities give children things to do, he said. All those assets make it harder to witness the

increasing decay around Milton-Freewater, Reino said, listing graffiti, falling down fences, broken windows and empty storefronts he sees around the town of about 7,000 people. "I want to stop it before it becomes irreversible," he said. Reino said he would also like to find ways the city can flex the budget to fund more police officers and firefighters, he said, acknowledging security of the community ranks high with him. Bringing back the city's popular recycling program is on his list, too, Reino said, and the idea is to find creative ways to accomplish more without adding taxes. He brings into the job a willingness to hear all sides of an issue, he added, a strength he developed from years of working in hospitality and customer service industries. "I am a very determined and strong-minded person that does not give in to political pressures of left or right, Reino said. It doesn't hurt that Reino, along with wife Kristina Reino, want Milton-Freewater to be at its best for their little boy, Evan, a student at Gib Olinger Elementary School. Reino will be officially sworn in at the April city council meeting, a date he's looking forward to, he said. "I'm hoping to do right by the people who voted for Verl," he said. "I understand people didn't vote for me and I definitely am going to do my best to earn this."

# Merkley touts American Rescue Plan benefits

By JADE MCDOWELL  
 East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty was one of several people from around the state who helped Sen. Jeff Merkley tout the benefits of the newest COVID-19 stimulus package on a video call with Oregon journalists on Friday, March 12. President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 on Thursday, March 11. The plan provides billions of dollars for COVID-19 vaccinations and testing, along with money for state and local governments, additional financial aid for businesses and relief for individuals that includes stimulus checks of up to \$1,400, large child tax credits and increased amounts for unemployment checks. Merkley called the plan "one of the most progressive and transformative pieces



Merkley Boise Doherty

of legislation since the New Deal." While the country isn't out of the woods yet with the pandemic, he said, the American Rescue Plan will help put its effects in the past. "This bill will put checks in Americans' pockets, shots in their arms, kids back in our classrooms, and open signs in the windows of businesses — small businesses across Main Street and across America," he said. During the call, Doherty thanked Merkley for his work in including direct payments to local governments so that they could determine how best to help their residents. With the previous stimulus package of CARES

Act funds, Doherty said there was too much of a one-size-fits-all approach from state officials doling out funds. While some counties' economies were devastated by the loss of tourism dollars for their restaurants and hotels, Morrow County residents are mostly essential workers in the agricultural and food processing industries, and had different needs, he said. "When we got the funds in their said, 'Use this on your restaurants and hospitalities,' and you know, as broad and diverse in all the things we've got going on, you can't buy a pair of socks in Morrow County," he said. "So what might fit for another county really didn't fit here. We needed to get our message out to our essential workers

## LOCAL BRIEFING

**Umatilla County sheriff approved to state board**

SALEM — Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan was among four officials approved by Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Senate as new members of the Board on Public Safety Standards and Training, according to a press release. As part of the Board, Rowan will represent the Oregon State Sheriff's Association during a three-year term beginning Monday, March 15, the press release said. Rowan replaces Malheur County Sheriff Brian Wolfe on the board. The board, which consists of 24 members representing Oregon's public and private safety professionals, establishes training and certification standards. It also determines the denial, suspension or revocation of public and private safety certifications and licenses for law enforcement, fire service personnel, telecommunications, emergency medical dispatchers, regulatory specialists of the Oregon

Liquor Control Commission, private security providers, private investigators, and polygraph examiners, the press release said.

**Meeting organized for superintendent candidates**

IONE — The Ione School District is inviting district staff and the community to meet the four candidates for the district's superintendent position, according to a press release. The district will host a Meet the Candidates event on Thursday, March 18, at 5 p.m. in the Ione High School gymnasium, 445 Spring St., Ione. The candidates — Kevin Dinning, Daniel Koopman, Tracey Johnson and Spencer Byrd — will be on hand to speak briefly to the entire audience, and then be available to meet and answer questions with small groups. Mask wearing and social distancing will be enforced during the event. Dinning is a middle school principal in Idaho, while Koopman currently is an instructional dean at Southwestern Oregon Community College. Johnson is the elementary principal at Ione Community Schools and Byrd is a superintendent in Illinois. — EO Media Group



Rowan

# Deadline to run in May election is March 18

East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Although federal, state and municipal elections are decided in even-number years, dozens of local races will be up for election on May 18. Seats on every school board in the county will be up for election, as well as various taxing districts that cover services like fire protection, parks and recreation, and cemeteries. The filing deadline for these seats is Thursday, March 18. At the Pendleton School District, all the incumbents up

for reelection — school board members Steve Umbarger of Position 1, Gary George of Position 4 and Debbie McBee of Position 7 — are retiring from the board. According to the Umatilla County Elections website, three people have filed to run, but two are running against each other. Chris Garrigues, a math teacher at Hermiston High School, is running against Patrick Gregg, an attorney at Pendleton law firm Corey, Byler & Rew, for Position 7. Rodney Thompson, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, is currently

running unopposed for Position 1. Like all other school districts in the county, all Pendleton School Board seats are at-large and anyone can run for any position as long as they reside in the district's boundaries. In Hermiston, the seats belonging to Karen Sherman, Mark Gomolski, Bryan Medelez and Brent Pitney are all up for election. Sherman and Pitney are running for new terms in Position 6 and Position 4, respectively. Dain Gardner, a senior trooper with the Oregon State Police, is running for Position 3, the seat held by Gomolski. If no one files for an open seat, the winner of the write-in vote will be offered the seat. If they decline, the board can appoint someone to the seat. Besides school boards, all fire districts, cemetery districts, water control districts and parks and recreation districts will also be on the ballot. Other taxing districts with elections include the boards that govern Blue Mountain Community College, the Umatilla County Special Library District, the Port of Umatilla, and the Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District.

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