

# Vaccine: White conservative men least likely to get jab

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shipments as demand is rapidly declining.

With case counts rising on average over the past few weeks, the county was moved from moderate risk back to high risk this week, bringing greater restrictions on businesses and gatherings, and raising concerns among officials who say local businesses can't withstand the constant shifts.

## New cases tied to unvaccinated residents

Officials say newly reported cases are coming almost entirely from residents who have yet to be vaccinated.

"I think it's frustrating to me that I get calls over and over and over again from people who want us to open up the county, open up large events, and have us start moving back to where we were," Murdock said. "But we can't order people to get vaccinated. It's such a contradiction to hear all day, every day, from people that want us to go a certain direction, there's a path to go there, and they don't want to go down it."

Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director, said the county lacks concrete data showing vaccine hesitancy falls along party lines, but added, anecdotally, that



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Syringes and vials of the Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines await distribution at a Umatilla County Public Health mass vaccination site in Pendleton on Friday, April 30, 2021.**

appears to be the case.

"We hear nationally that the Republican white man is the least likely to be getting the COVID vaccination right now," he said. "And we know we have a decent sized population of white Republican men in this county. And so the assumption I make is there's probably something there."

However, Fiumara noted that some Hispanic and Latino residents, as well as

people from some religious groups, are also hesitant to get vaccinated.

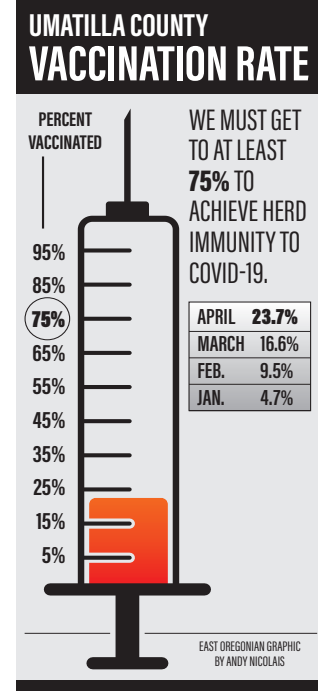
To combat this, Fiumara said county health officials are working to create new ways to inform specific groups about the importance, safety and efficacy of vaccines, though he didn't provide specifics.

## 'Mind-boggling' resistance to vaccine

For the commissioners and

Fiumara, what is "mind-boggling" is the vaccine is now seeing reluctance from Republicans when it was, in fact, designed under a Republican administration.

With Operation Warp Speed, an effort that saw vaccines developed at an unprecedented rate with billions of dollars from the Trump administration, the former president repeatedly said vaccines would be the



solution to the pandemic and took credit when they were cleared for use in November 2020.

The Biden administration, however, promptly took steps to hasten the rollout after the election and drove the development of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which has reached nearly 7 million Americans despite being paused briefly after six women reported blood clots. The vaccine has now been cleared by the Food and Drug Administration with a warning label noting the potential for rare blood clots.

"This really isn't about Republican or Democrat, this is not a control move, this is not many of these conspiracy theory items that are fun and off-the-wall sometimes," Fiumara said. "It's much more straightforward. It's about protecting yourself and protecting those around you, because they're the ones who end up suffering if something goes wrong."

By getting vaccinated and speaking out about vaccinations, Shafer said he's looking to shift the stigma with some hopes the county can make progress toward reopening in time for summer events.

"I want our county to be open," he said. "I don't want any restrictions in place because of our numbers. And the way to do that is the vaccine."

Fiumara said despite the county's low vaccination rates, he's optimistic that more and more people will get vaccinated as the rollout continues. Even now, he said health officials are seeing people change their minds.

"I think people are recognizing that this is our path out of here," he said. "People who were more on the fence aren't so on the fence now that millions and millions across the country are receiving it with very low side effects or down side."

# Testing:

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tunities as last year's fifth graders," Mooney said.

The assessments also provide a way for the Oregon Department of Education to compare school districts across the state. But Mooney said the department has already said it will be suspending the usual accountability measures tied to test scores. The department is also suspending the "essential skills requirement" for both this year and next year for graduating seniors. The requirement has, in the past, required that seniors either pass their state tests or submit a sufficient work sample in those subjects before graduating.

She said the district fully intends to start participating in state assessments again next year.

The Pendleton School District didn't even know that opting out of state testing was an option.

But when considering whether to hold tests this spring or defer them to the fall, Pendleton Superintendent Chris Fritsch said administrators preferred starting next year as normally as possible without having to worry about administering assessments.

Matt Yoshioka, the district's director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, said Pendleton would have preferred the U.S. Department of Education approved the state's waiver to forgo testing completely.

The waiver was denied, but the federal government has



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

**Students in Michelle Herburger's fourth grade class settle in to the first day of in-person instruction at Washington Elementary School in Pendleton on Feb. 22, 2021.**

allowed local school districts to reduce the scope of testing this year, and Pendleton plans to take advantage.

With each grade level only required to take one test, Yoshioka said he expects

every grade level to complete their testing in one day across the first few weeks of May. He added that students still learning online would be required to come to school to take the test, but 90% have already

made the individual choice of opting out of testing this year. "That's fine," he said. "They have the right to do that."

The state isn't scrutinizing test scores this year, and neither is the Pendleton School District.

With the academic struggles created by the pandemic and the abbreviated test schedule, Yoshioka said the assessments won't give the district an accurate idea of where students are at. Administering the tests this spring, Yoshioka said, is merely a way to fulfill federal requirements.

The county's smaller school districts also had choices to make.

For Umatilla School District, the district has always gone its own way on assessments. It relies on the

MAPS test, rather than the Smarter Balanced test used for state report cards, to gather data about student progress. Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the district has continued with online MAPS tests this year, with the final round of tests in May. Students will only take the Smarter Balanced test if their parents specifically request it.

In Stanfield School District, Superintendent Beth Burton said Stanfield students will be given the opportunity to take the state assessment this spring if their parents request it, but the district will not be making it a priority to promote higher participation rates.

"Instead, we are continuing to focus on student connections, teaching, and learning," she wrote in an email.

# Library:

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early 1990s. A licensed clinical social worker for the Oregon Health Authority at a facility in Pendleton, Thomas also provides private therapeutic services through the Better-Help platform.

Over the years, Thomas has served on a number of appointed commissions for mayors Phillip Houk and John Turner, including the Pendleton Airport Commission and Arts Commission of Pendleton. Thomas is proud of the work of the libraries throughout Umatilla County. He's especially pleased with their creativity in going above and beyond in helping meet people's needs in the midst of a global pandemic.

"I want to continue to be a part of that, no matter what challenges the future may hold," Thomas said.

## Caleb Barron

A Umatilla resident, Barron has resided in Eastern Oregon for 23 years and is currently a private security officer. Running for the special library district board is a way for him to get more involved in the community.

"I value what the public library achieves: encouraging literacy and lowering the barriers to knowledge for all members of the community," he said.

As an avid reader, Barron said he's capable of assimilating information and making reason-based decisions with that information. He also said he's skilled at interacting with various age groups.

## Sharone Pettus McCann

McCann has lived in Stanfield for more than 40 years.

## ABOUT THE LIBRARY DISTRICT

The Umatilla County Special Library District was approved by voters in 1986 as a special taxing district. It includes all of Umatilla County, with the exception of the city of Hermiston.

The library district's mission is to work in partnership with the libraries to ensure excellent library services, programs and continuing education opportunities for all. For questions, contact 541-276-6449, director@ucsl.org or visit www.ucsl.org.

This is her first time running for an elected position.

"I am an avid reader and interested in promoting libraries and their services in our communities," she said. "Our libraries build community and promote education."

McCann, who is retiring this year, has taught in the College Prep Department at Blue Mountain Community College for 36 years. She recently agreed to serve on the district's budget committee and hopes to gain information that will assist her in becoming a knowledgeable board member.

She views serving on the library board as "the perfect place to begin my retirement."

## Jubilee Barron

Barron, who lives in Umatilla, has been in Eastern Oregon for 18 years. While she has never ran for previous boards or political offices, she has good memories growing up going to the library. She views serving on the board as a way to give back to the community.

"I would like kids to have

the same opportunities to experience the feelings of reading a good book or meeting the friendly librarians," Barron said. "I believe that librarians can change your life."

Currently, Barron has a lawn mowing and odd jobs business. She enjoys crafting, writing and reading, including out loud to others.

## Gaby Gonzalez

A resident of Umatilla, Gonzalez has been an Oregonian for approximately 18 months. She is currently a property manager, overseeing two apartment complexes in Hermiston.

While this is her first time running for this type of position, Gonzalez said she is excited for the opportunity to grow. In addition, she hopes to become a part of the board where she can share new ideas.

"I am bilingual, love to learn new things and I'm very passionate about community outreach in the bilingual/Spanish speaking community."

## Fatima Machado

Machado, who resides in Pendleton, has lived in Eastern Oregon since 2002. While she hasn't been elected to a board previously, she has knowledge of libraries through her work as an academic librarian at Columbia Basin College. She holds a master's degree in Library and Information Science.

"I work predominantly in the academic library space, but I have always wanted to extend my knowledge to public libraries," Machado said. I'm interested in serving on the UCSLD board to learn more about (and be a part of) rural public libraries and its work and contributions to our communities."

# Table: Opponents say project would be a major polluter

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rescheduled to Thursday, May 6.

Erin Saylor, attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper, described the environmental group as skeptical about the mystery buyer and why someone would want to come forward after reading about the litigation attached to the project.

"We were pretty disappointed," she said. "We've been calling this a zombie project for years. And this latest development demonstrates just how true it is. We thought it was dead and now it's miraculously come back to life again."

The technology planned for Perennial Wind Chaser Station would allow it to power up more quickly than most power plants. According to the statement from Perennial, the plant would

be used to prevent disruptions to customers' power during peak usage times when renewable energy sources were not able to keep up with demand. It could be quickly brought online when the wind was not blowing at area wind farms, for example.

"We remain convinced that the Wind Chaser technology we proposed is both sound and in the best interests of Oregon and its residents in terms of protecting the Oregon grid and its customers from potential future power disruptions, so we are encouraged by this new interest in continuing the development of this site ... With energy demands ever increasing in the region, we must continue to consider how to provide clean energy sources that have minimal impact upon the environment. Wind Chaser will rely

upon the least polluting of the hydrocarbons sources, natural gas, to help the region transition to a green-based energy future," the company stated.

Opponents paint it in a different light. According to a statement by Columbia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the plant would be a major polluter, emitting more than 1 million tons of greenhouse gases a year and becoming the sixth largest stationary source of greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

Saylor said now that Perennial has decided to continue with the litigation, Columbia Riverkeepers and Friends of the Columbia Gorge will persist with their efforts to fight the project in court, arguing that its site certificate is no longer valid and therefore can't be transferred to another party.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY