

# Political candidates vie for voters' attention as primary looms

By GARY A. WARNER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — As Oregon's political campaigns head into the final stretch before the May 17 primary, candidates on the left and right are working for votes among their ideological base to win the closed primaries. With only party members able to vote in partisan primary races, the turnout is usually about half of the general election.

Republicans are seeking votes of Republican activists who won't skip the primary, while Democrats go after the progressive wing of their party who turn out in large numbers for primaries. It's also a time when lesser-known candidates can make a splash and draw the attention of the party faithful. That's been the story in recent days in political action around the state.

## Baker City mayor speaks at a right-wing rally in Salem

Baker City Mayor Kerry McQuisten, a Republican candidate for governor, appeared at the Reawaken America rally of radical conservatives on Friday, April 1, near the Capitol in the Salem suburb of Keizer. The event was sponsored by The River Church in Salem, a church active in conser-



Kerry McQuisten for Oregon/Contributed Photo  
**Oregon Republican gubernatorial candidate and Baker City Mayor Kerry McQuisten, right, stands Friday, April 1, 2022, at the Reawaken America rally in Keizer with former Gen. Michael Flynn, who President Donald Trump pardoned of charges he lied about contacts with Russian agents while working at the White House.**

vative politics, and held at Volcano Stadium, a former minor league baseball park near Interstate 5.

Originally scheduled to be held in Bend, the event was canceled due to questions

involving the enforcement of coronavirus restrictions at the Deschutes County fairgrounds.

The Salem Statesman-Journal reported that stores at Keizer Station mall



Dave Killen/The Oregonian  
**Alsea School District Superintendent Marc Thielman, who's running for governor, says the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Education "need to stop being science deniers and catch up with this virus."**

next to the ballpark decided to close April 1 and 2 because of the rally and expected counterprotests.

Keizer is the latest stop on a national tour focusing on debunked claims that the 2020 election was "stolen" from former President Donald Trump, and COVID-19 conspiracy theories.

Photos on Twitter showed McQuisten with Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack and former Gen. Michael Flynn, who President Donald Trump pardoned of charges

he lied about contacts with Russian agents while working at the White House. Flynn also has appeared in a video taking "the Qanon Oath" of the far-right political conspiracy group, which ends with "Where we go one, we go all."

McQuisten has made an energetic bid to break through the crowded Republican field for governor, which includes former House Minority Leader Christine Drazen, Sandy Mayor Bill Pulliam and 2016 GOP nominee for governor Bud Pierce of Salem.

McQuisten was recently endorsed by The Northwest Observer, a popular conservative political blog in Oregon.

## Other GOP candidates taking a hard right on campaign trail

Marc Thielman, a Republican candidate for governor who appeared with Senate candidate Darin Harbick and Deschutes County Commissioner Patti Adair with a QAnon-supporting pastor at a Bend church last week, gained notice while he was superintendent of the Alsea School District near Corvallis for refusing to enforce state coronavirus mandates. He resigned in February. He's the subject of a \$3.7 million lawsuit against the district

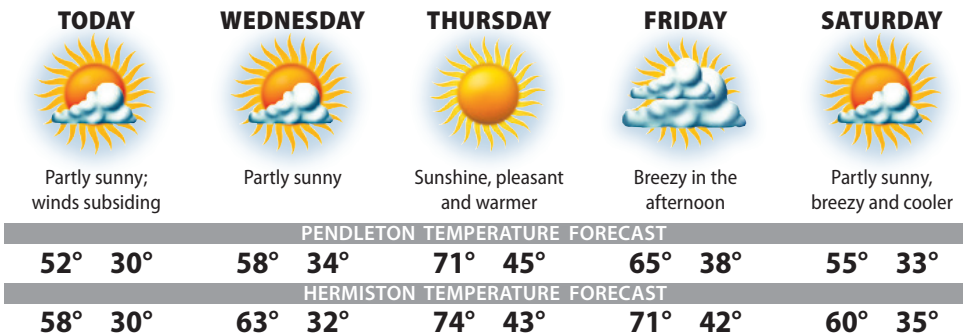
by the principal of Alsea Elementary School, who alleges a hostile work environment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and whistleblower retaliation.

Willamette Week reports Thielman is scheduled to speak April 15 at a fundraiser for Dan Tooze, a Republican candidate for House District 40 in the Oregon City area. Tooze is a self-described member of the Proud Boys, a group involved in riots in downtown Portland, the Oregon Capitol and the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Tooze has not said he was at any of those incidents.

Reed Christensen, an electrical engineer from Hillsboro, faces federal charges for allegedly assaulting law enforcement officers while attempting to enter the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Christensen has made his arrest the centerpiece of his campaign for governor, saying he was trying to oppose "tyranny" by taking part in the riot's attempt to stop the count of electoral votes that Joe Biden won the presidential election.

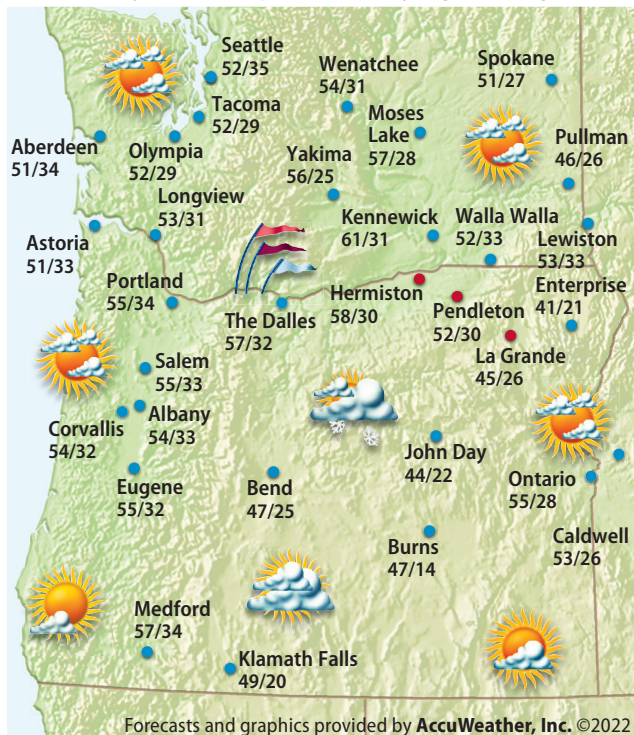
Jo Rae Perkins, a candidate for the U.S. Senate seat held by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, also has taken the QAnon pledge. She was the GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate in 2020, losing to incumbent U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

**PENDLETON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	58°	45°
Normals	60°	38°
Records	79° (1960)	24° (1896)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.01"  
Month to date 0.07"  
Normal month to date 0.19"  
Year to date 3.67"  
Last year to date 3.34"  
Normal year to date 4.26"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	59°	49°
Normals	63°	37°
Records	81° (1944)	24° (2009)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.03"  
Month to date 0.14"  
Normal month to date 0.11"  
Year to date 2.09"  
Last year to date 1.73"  
Normal year to date 2.88"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Wed.
Boardman WSW 12-25	NE 4-8
Pendleton WSW 15-25	NE 6-12

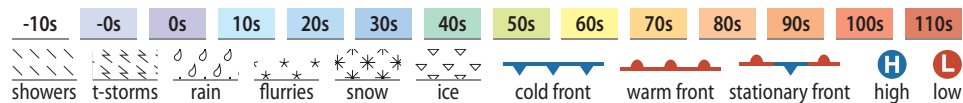
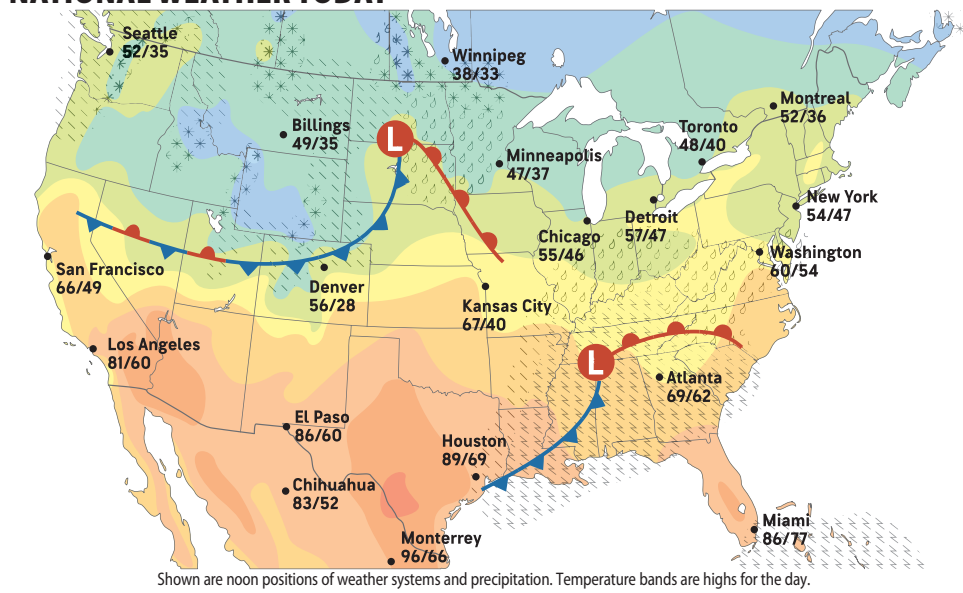
**SUN AND MOON**  
Sunrise today 6:28 a.m.  
Sunset tonight 7:28 p.m.  
Moonrise today 8:37 a.m.  
Moonset today none

First	Full	Last	New
Apr 8	Apr 16	Apr 23	Apr 30

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 94° in Zapata, Texas Low 14° in Granby, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Trial delayed in construction fraud case

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — The trial of a Baker City man accused of taking money from customers for construction work he failed to start, or in some cases to finish, has been postponed after two attorneys appointed to represent him withdrew.

Kenneth Edward Hackett, 51, was slated to go to trial April 25 in Baker County Circuit Court.

Hackett was arrested on June 19, 2021, following an investigation by the Baker City Police and Baker County Sheriff's Office into construction fraud complaints. Two incidents involved a combined loss of \$78,000, according to a June 2021 press release from Baker City Police.

A grand jury indictment in June 2021 included three counts:

- Aggravated first-degree theft, \$10,000 or more, from Barbara Duran.
  - Aggravated first-degree theft, \$10,000 or more, from Jerry Martin.
  - First-degree theft, \$1,000 or more, from Robert Anders.
- A new indictment on Aug. 26, 2021, added four

additional counts:

- First-degree theft, \$1,000 or more, from Therese Holthausen.
- First-degree theft, \$1,000 or more, from Kurt Gronbach.
- Aggravated first-degree theft, \$10,000 or more, from Carol or Tim Delsman.
- First-degree theft, \$1,000 or more, from Michael Ragsdale.

Greg Baxter, Baker County district attorney, said a charge can be elevated from first-degree theft, a Class C felony, to aggravated first-degree theft, a Class B felony, if the amount is \$10,000 or more, or if the victim is 65 or older.

Robert Whitnah of Baker City was appointed in July 2021 to represent Hackett.

Whitnah filed a motion on March 14, 2022, to withdraw as Hackett's attorney, and Judge Matt Shirtcliff approved that motion the same day.

Another Baker City attorney, Bob Moon, was appointed on March 16 to represent Hackett.

Moon filed a motion to withdraw as Hackett's attorney on March 25.

Shirtcliff approved Moon's order on March 31.

A status check on the case has been scheduled for April 19.

Baxter said his office is prepared to go the trial.

Neither Whitnah nor Moon cited a reason for withdrawing as Hackett's attorney.

Whitnah in his motion wrote, "I cannot disclose further specific grounds for this request without violating the Oregon Rules of Professional Conduct."

Moon wrote in his motion that "for ethical reasons, I cannot disclose the reason that I must withdraw as the attorney of record."

Three other alleged fraud cases reported to Baker City Police in 2021 were settled by civil action between the residents and Hackett, according to a Baker City Police June 2021 press release.

According to the Oregon Contractor Construction Board, Hackett never has been a licensed contractor in Oregon.

The agency fined Hackett five times between 2009 and 2021 for working without a license, said Leslie Culpepper, communications and education manager for the Contractor Construction Board.

## IN BRIEF

### Repair work on NE Oregon bridges progresses

LA GRANDE — Repairs on local bridges are underway in the La Grande area. The Oregon Department of Transportation provided an update on three bridges being worked on, while detailing next week's plans.

According to a press release from ODOT on Friday, April 1, work may be delayed this week as the department waits on steel anchors to be delivered.

The Second Street Bridge across Interstate 84 still is closed to vehicular traffic, but bicycles and pedestrians can cross over. This week's work will include work on the bridge deck and edge of the bridge, as well as expansion joints.

The McAlister Road Bridge repair work will include drilling holes for the new concrete bridge rail and minor repairs to the bridge deck. According to the press release, workers will be flagging intermittently with delays of up to 20 minutes between 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on weekdays. During non-working hours, there will be no traffic delays.

The OR86 bridge over I-84 at the Richland Interchange will include drilling holes for steel anchors on the new concrete bridge trail. The work will result in intermittent flagging with delays on the same schedule as the McAlister Road Bridge. Similarly, there will be no traffic delays during non-working hours.

Further details on the bridge repair projects can be found on the ODOT website.

—EO Media Group

**CORRECTIONS:** The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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