

# Union County group opposes county's resolution against vaccine mandate

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — A Union County group is pushing to have its voice heard in the wake of recent actions taken by the Union County Board of Commissioners.

Citizens of Union County for Health and Safety, an impromptu group of local residents, organized a letter with 198 signatures in opposition to the county's recent resolution against vaccination mandates. The resolution protested statewide vaccine mandates in fear of losing health care workers and first responders, declaring a state of emergency.

"We hope it motivates the county commissioners to rethink their plans," said Pat Kennedy, one of the organizers of the group. "We wanted to show that we're not a county of people totally opposed to vaccines and masks."

## Speaking out

Kennedy, along with several other organizers, put together Citizens of Union County for Health and Safety upon reading the commissioners' resolution. The letter was sent to Gov. Kate Brown, advocating that she continue requiring vaccinations in Union County.

The group sent out emails and received just under 200 signatures in roughly three days.

"I just thought, I've got to do something about this," Kennedy said. "I received some very moving emails from people that were giving up or feeling depressed about this. I think this was very motivating to them."

Kennedy noted that the group disagrees with what they see as a lack of enforcement of vaccines



Alex Wittwer/The (La Grande) Observer

A group of Union County citizens say protests, such as Sept. 18 event shown in the photo, don't represent their feelings about the pandemic. The group has sent a letter with nearly 200 signatures to county officials stating their support for vaccinations and mask wearing.

and masks from the county, in addition to objecting to Sheriff Cody Bowen's letter to Brown on Aug. 13. His letter condemned the vaccine mandates and advocated for freedom of choice in getting vaccinated.

"Each one of us was quite upset about the actions of the county," said Margaret Mead, one of the group's organizers. "We thought that our opinions should be heard. If we don't speak up, we're not helping the situation."

A major point in the letter is advocating for frontline workers who are exposed to a large amount of people at their place of work every day. Multiple organizers of the group expressed their desire to help represent health care workers, government employees and retail workers.

"Our public health and government facilities and local businesses are not safe if staffed by people who are not vaccinated or tested frequent-

ly for potential infection," the letter reads. "We contend that the Union County Commissioners, and Sheriff Bowen, are representing a vocal minority of people in Union County who instead of unemployment could choose vaccination."

The letter from Citizens of Union County for Health and Safety also states that health care staff shortages will not be settled if the mandate is lifted because more health care workers will be impacted by the effects of COVID-19.

"Staff shortages will not be resolved by lifting the mandate because workers, vaccinated and unvaccinated, who test positive for COVID-19 will not be able to work due to quarantines, illnesses managed at home, long-term hospitalizations and/or death," the letter reads.

## County response

Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage read

the letter and was appreciative of the group exercising their freedom of speech.

"This is America and I appreciate hearing their opinion," she said. "If you have an opinion, you have the right to be heard."

Beverage noted that the group organizing the letter may have misinterpreted parts of the county's resolution, but that hearing opinions from citizens is always welcomed.

"It's a big part of our job to hear opinions, so I appreciated that they voiced their concern," she said.

Beverage stated that the commissioners still believe in the resolution and emphasized the support for medical freedom.

She said that the letter will not change the county's status on the resolution, emphasizing the points made in the document regarding the availability of health care workers.

# Idaho governor repeals rival's executive order

■ Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin had issued executive order banning COVID-19 testing

By KEITH RIDLER

Associated Press

BOISE — The Idaho governor on Wednesday, Oct. 6 issued an executive order repealing his political rival's executive order from the previous day involving COVID-19 vaccine passports and mandatory testing.

Republican Gov. Brad Little issued the order while still in Texas, a move that challenges the state's long-standing practice of making the lieutenant governor acting governor when the governor is out of state.

Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin, a far-right Republican who is running to take Little's job, issued her order Tuesday and also sought to activate the Idaho National Guard and send soldiers to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Little is in Texas meeting with nine other Republican governors over concerns on how President Joe Biden is handling border issues. In Idaho, the governor and lieutenant governor don't run on the same ticket. Little was expected back late Wednesday.

Little's executive order appears to lay the groundwork for a court challenge to determine who is in charge when governor leaves the state.

Little's order states that he did not authorize McGeachin to act, and it cites Idaho law.

"Nor does my temporary presence in Texas on official business impair my ability to represent the people of Idaho thus necessitating action by another executive to ensure the continuity of state government," the executive order states.

The order also notes that Little had previously through an executive order banned state entities from requiring vaccine passports.

Little's order also states that McGeachin's order prohibiting COVID-19 testing would harm the state's ability to curb the spread of the disease.

Idaho is currently under crisis standards of care because of unvaccinated COVID-19 patients filling hospitals. Nearly 3,000 people have died from the disease in the state.

Little's office declined to comment about his executive order.

McGeachin's office didn't return a call from The Associated Press.

The attorney general's office, which would appear to have to defend the state's top executive in the dispute, declined to comment.



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