

Missing man found dead in submerged vehicle

Wallowa County Chieftain staff
WALLOWA LAKE — A 26-year-old Enterprise man was found dead in his vehicle — which had been recovered from Wallowa Lake — on Friday.
The body of Devin Nelson Woempner-Velarde was found in the passenger area of a gold-colored 1999 Toyota Camry, according to a Wallowa County Sheriff’s Office press release issued Monday.
Woempner-Velarde — and his vehicle — had been missing since April 11.
A caller reported the vehicle was in the lake at Wallowa Lake State Park off the boat ramp, the sheriff’s office reported. The sheriff’s office and Oregon State Police responded, and, with the help of state park staff and an un-

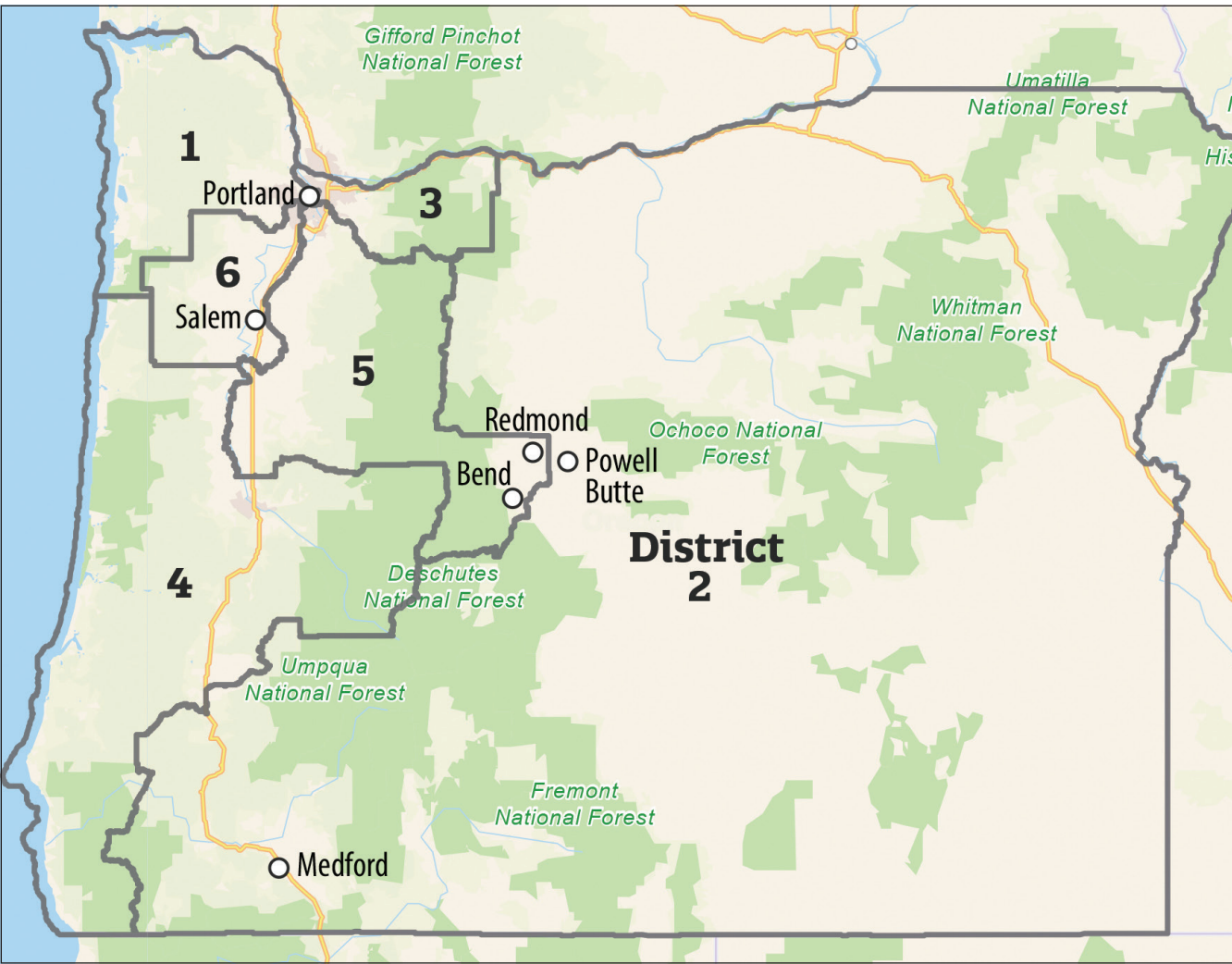
derwater camera, found the vehicle submerged roughly 40 feet from the boat ramp.
Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish said Tuesday that it appears Woempner-Velarde drove off the ramp, and likely before Friday. The boat ramp was “covered with snow” that was reported as not having tracks in it when the vehicle was located.
“The ignition was on and the car was in drive,” Fish said. “It looks like he drove off.”
The sheriff added that the cause of death, “appears to be drowning, (but) the medical examiner hasn’t finished a death certificate yet.”
Fish said park rangers reported seeing a gold-colored car at the park April 11 or 12, but were not certain if it was Woempner-Velarde’s vehicle.

Republicans

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The Dorchester Conference, held Friday through Sunday, started 57 years ago as a gathering of insurgent liberal Republicans but has changed with party politics over the decades to reflect the mostly conservative bent of GOP activists.
Prior to the conference, four candidates for the Republican nomination for governor will take part in a debate in Bend on Thursday that will be streamed online at 7 p.m. Republican candidates running for the 5th Congressional District seat held by U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby, will participate in a candidate forum on Thursday with the City Club of Central Oregon and the Deschutes County League of Women Voters.
The debates will continue over the weekend at the Dorchester Conference. A larger pool of the more than a dozen Republicans running for governor will debate, while another 5th District faceoff will be held between the two candidates drawing the most financial support in the race: Former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer of Happy Valley and Bend businessman Jimmy Crumpacker.
A key difference in the debates: The audiences at the Dorchester Conference will take a straw poll to pick a favorite candidate in both races.
While Republicans see reason for hope in 2022, the current reality is daunting.
Republicans now find their voter registration numbers in third place, behind nonaffiliated voters and Democrats.
The party has not won a race for governor since Vic Atiyeh won a second term in 1982. No Republican has won a U.S. Senate seat since Gordon Smith was reelected in 2002.
Democrats in Oregon have what political analysts call a “triplex” — one party has the offices of governor, attorney general and secretary of state. Democrats also hold majorities in both chambers of the Legislature and the treasurer’s office. Both U.S. senators and four of five U.S. House members are Democrats.
A new challenge for Republicans is the emergence of former Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, as a nonaffiliated candidate for governor. The daughter of a former Republican state lawmaker and mayor of Redmond, she’s staking out a middle ground between the two parties that she says have become more extreme.
Whether Johnson will siphon more votes from Republicans or Democrats is up for debate, but in terms of campaign contributions, her largest donations have come from Nike founder Phil Knight and several timber, construction and manufacturing firms that have given mostly to Republicans in the past.
One of the ongoing de-

bates at the Republican conference is whether the party should broaden its appeal to attract more voters or remain ideologically consistent and hope voters will come around to the party’s positions. Those tensions surfaced during the 2018 conference, when the late Secretary of State Dennis Richardson, the only GOP statewide officeholder, called for a “big tent,” saying his 2016 upset win was driven by voters seeking good government, not partisan affiliation.
“They wanted to elect somebody who would keep his promise to do that which was best for our state,” Richardson said. “I said when I was elected you wouldn’t be able to tell if there was an ‘R’ or a ‘D’ behind my name, and I hope that you can see that I’ve tried to live up to that.”
But at the same event, one of the key speakers was Roger Stone, a political operative for President Donald Trump. He appeared at the conference flanked by a “bodyguard” of members of The Proud Boys, a far-right and at times physically aggressive all-male organization. Stone urged activists to take up tools to get around the institutions he said opposed Trump and conservative Republicans.
“The rise of a vibrant, robust alternative media, the rise of social media, Twitter, Facebook and so on, is what allowed for the election of an outsider candidate who the mainstream media sought to destroy,” Stone said.
Richardson died of brain cancer in 2019. Trump pardoned Stone of seven felony charges in 2020. And more than three dozen Proud Boys have been indicted on charges connected to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.
Along with Oregon politics, the conference will include a presentation on a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan, while Steve Yates, national security adviser for former Vice President Dick Cheney, will talk about what went on “behind the scenes” during and after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, will talk about Republican plans in Congress, where the party is hoping to take back the majority in November. Panels will discuss natural gas, dam removal and the potential future of nuclear-generated energy.
Much of the draw for those who attend are the smaller receptions, lunches and meetings held to network throughout the weekend. The conference has scheduled a golf tournament for guests, weather permitting.
As soon as the Republicans wrap up, it will be the Democrats’ turn to party with their party. The 11th annual Oregon Summit of the Democratic Party of Oregon will be held at Sunriver Resort from April 29 to May 1. It features Democratic Party versions of the debates, panels, workshops and network-building of the Dorchester Conference held before it.

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Source: Esri

This map shows Oregon congressional districts approved in 2021 after redistricting.

Primary

Continued from A1
Though the state has just 2.9 million voters, Oregon’s one U.S. Senate seat and six U.S. House seats are part of the electoral math both Republicans and Democrats are puzzling over in 2022.
Democrats hold a 221-209 majority in the House, with five vacancies. The Senate is split 50-50, with 35 seats up on ballots around the nation.
The partisan split won’t be known until after the November election. But new campaign finance reports filed last week show heavy spending by candidates jockeying to carry their party’s banner in the fall.
The Federal Elections Commission released candidates’ financial reports covering the first three months of 2022.
Much of the attention in Oregon has gone to the free-for-all race for the new 6th Congressional District seat centered around Salem. With no incumbent in the race, 16 candidates have signed up to run in the primary.
The race received national attention last week with the revelation that a Democratic PAC tied to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had directed \$1 million to Carrick Flynn, a political newcomer with ties to cryptocurrency entrepreneurs.
The other Democratic candidates, who include two state lawmakers, cried foul and were joined by Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, in condemning the unusual primary boost.
But an expected slam-dunk U.S. Senate race and a pair of scrambled congressional races could play outsized roles in deciding which party swings the gavels when a new Congress is sworn in next January.
U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, was the most prodigious fundraiser, reporting he’s received \$11 million since the beginning of 2021 for his bid to win another six-year term in the seat he’s held since 1996.
The five Republicans vying to run against Wyden in November raised less than \$400,000 put together.
The Oregon election is listed in major national forecasts as a “safe” Democratic seat. But Wyden is taking no chances, reporting he has over \$7 million in the bank.
When the new political maps were approved in Sep-

tember, both Democrats and Republicans agreed that Democrats were a prohibitive favorite in the 1st and 3rd U.S. House districts, while Republicans were a lock on the 2nd District.
The financial reports reflect those odds with donations piling up for incumbents.
U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton, reported raising \$605,435 between Jan. 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022. G. Scott Phillips, a Democrat running in the May primary has raised \$20,944. Republican Armidia Murray did not have enough contributions to be required to file a report.
U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland, reported raising \$795,393 over the same time period. Republican Joanna Harbour, who lost the 2020 election to Blumenauer, reported raising no money so far in 2022, but has \$2,408 in her campaign fund from previous time periods.
U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, the state’s lone Republican in the delegation to Washington, D.C., reported \$640,758 over the same 15 months. Democrat Joseph Yetter received \$10,312.
The highest stakes of the six U.S. House races may be in the 5th Congressional District.
U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby, faces challenges from the left and right in a district that’s been radically reconfigured by redistricting. He’s seeking to return to Congress in a district whose 2022 boundaries contain less than half the registered voters of his current seat.
The latest campaign finance reports show Schrader has raised more than \$1 million in the past three months, about twice as much as his primary challenger, Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Terrebonne.
Schrader reported raising \$713,641 from his main campaign committee. The FEC also reported Schrader

received \$385,311 from independent expenditure committees, nearly all of it from a group called Center Forward Committee. It backs Schrader, but he does not officially control its fundraising and spending.
Spending also rose sharply, with Schrader reporting \$1,567,994 in expenditures. He has \$2,703,441 in the bank, including money he raised in 2021.
McLeod-Skinner reported raising \$545,505 and spending \$235,395. She has \$310,110 in the bank.
While trailing in money, McLeod-Skinner has touted her string of endorsements by Democratic activists frustrated by Schrader’s tepid support and occasional opposition to Biden’s legislative agenda in Congress.
McLeod-Skinner has drawn endorsements from the Democratic Party committees in Deschutes, Clackamas, Linn, and Marion counties, four of the five counties that make up the district. She’s also been endorsed by the United Food and Commercial Workers union that represents 24,000 grocery workers. The Oregon Education Association, the union representing 41,000 teachers, endorsed McLeod-Skinner, despite its parent organization, the National Education Association, giving Schrader an A grade on his votes on education legislation.
McLeod-Skinner’s campaign put out an email after the campaign finance reports were released saying that more funds were needed to make up for the cancellation by Schrader of a primary debate.
“Enthusiasm is continuing to build around Jamie, but unfortunately, we fell short of our mid-month fundraising goal last Friday,” the message said.
The winner of the Democratic primary will face the victor of the Republican vote on May 17. Bend businessman

Jimmy Crumpacker and former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer were the top two fundraisers, according to FEC reports.
Contributions to the two were neck-and-neck, with Crumpacker raising \$467,195 since October of 2021, while Chavez-DeRemer received \$455,930. But Chavez-DeRemer has spent \$247,415, 10 times more than the \$29,226 that Crumpacker reported. Crumpacker had \$437,968 in the bank, while DeRemer reported \$208,515 in the bank.
A joint political action committee created to fund both Chavez-DeRemer and 4th District GOP candidate Alek Skarlatos of Roseburg had brought in only \$1,800 since it was created, according to FEC reports.
Skarlatos lost a close 2020 race to U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield. He immediately launched plans for a rematch in 2022. He’s raised \$1,774,805 since the beginning of 2021 and his latest campaign finance report showed he had \$562,073 in the bank at the end of March.
But there will be no rematch. After the Oregon Legislature approved a redistricting plan that increased the percentage of registered Democrats in the district, DeFazio announced he was retiring and later endorsed Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle, who dropped her reelection bid and filed to run for Congress.
Hoyle’s report released on Friday shows she’s raised \$626,325 and has \$387,996 in the bank. The money Hoyle has left is more than twice the amount in the bank of each of the three other actively fundraising Democrats in the race: engineering professor John Selker of Corvallis, Airbnb executive Andrew Kalloch of Eugene and attorney Doyle Canning of Eugene.
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DON'T MISS

THIS

WEEKEND'S

ISSUE

Parade

Bill Hader Is Back, p. 2

"You create your own luck. It's not gonna come to you."

Liam Neeson

On making his 100th film, living with grief and looking at the bright side of life

DEATH NOTICES

Eleanor
of Bend
December 9, 1926 -
March 20, 2022
Arrangements: Deschutes Memorial Chapel & Gardens
541-382-5592
Services: June 6, 2022, 9am,
Willamette National Cemetery,
Portland (private family service)
Contributions can be made to:
DAV

OBITUARY DEADLINE
Call to ask about our deadlines
541-385-5809
Monday - Friday 10am - 3pm
Email: obits@bendbulletin.com