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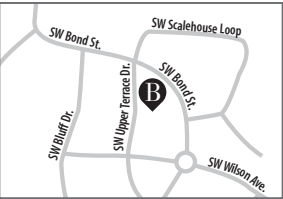
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

RACE FOR OREGON GOVERNOR

Candidate Betsy Johnson questioned over her handling of a 2013 car crash

HILLARY BORRUD

The Oregonian

Oregon unaffiliated gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson is under scrutiny this week for her handling of a 2013 car crash in which Johnson, then a Democratic state senator, rear-ended and injured another driver who was coming to a stop at a red light in Scappoose.

At the time, news reports focused on Johnson's serious injuries, which caused her to miss more than a month of the Legislative session and use a wheelchair for six months.

It escaped notice that Johnson, through her lawyers, subsequently cited her position as a state lawmaker to argue that the driver Johnson rear-ended, Melissa Gallentine, could not sue Johnson for personal injury because she was driving as part of her official work duties.

Willamette Week first reported Johnson's efforts to avoid responsibility in the case on Wednesday, primarily highlighting a different but related argument Johnson made, that she was shielded from being served with a lawsuit during a legislative session.

When Johnson pushed for a judge to drop her as a defendant and leave only her employer, the state of Oregon, to answer for the crash, the Oregon Department of Justice, then as now led by Democrat Ellen Rosenblum, did not object.

But Gallentine's lawyers argued a judge, not Rosenblum's office, should determine whether Johnson's inattentive driving in Scappoose was in fact part of her official duties as a legislator.



Betsy Johnson, who seeks to run for governor of Oregon as a non-affiliated candidate, poses in her campaign office in downtown Portland on May 27. If she gathers enough signatures and qualifies for the ballot, the former lawmaker will be in a three-way race for the governor's seat in November.

Sara Cline/AP file

"A simple 'I'm sorry' and 'I'm responsible' would have been greatly appreciated," Gallentine said by phone on Wednesday. "(Johnson) just kept forcing more the other aspect, which was, 'I didn't do anything wrong' and trying to win a case, to show zero fault."

Johnson has pledged that if elected governor, she will emphasize personal responsibility — specifically for Oregon's homeless residents — and push for more government accountability.

On Wednesday, Johnson did not respond to a phone call seeking comment, and her campaign declined to comment and refused to answer questions emailed by The Oregonian.

Among the questions Johnson would not answer: Why did she believe the state of Oregon and taxpayers should take sole responsibility for her car crash? Was Johnson aware of her lawyers' invocation of legislative immunity to defend against the \$260,000 personal injury lawsuit? Did Johnson

take any actions following the crash that demonstrated personal responsibility or accountability?

Christine Drazan, the Republican nominee for governor, weighed in Wednesday on social media. "This is a clear abuse of legislative immunity. No one should be above accountability or above the law, especially those in power. Oregonians are tired of self-serving politicians. We deserve leaders who follow the law and tell the truth," she tweeted.

The Oregonian also asked Johnson's campaign to comment on why the longtime state lawmaker has racked up so many traffic violations: a dozen since 1991, including failure to obey traffic devices and basic driving rules, speeding and failure to wear a seat belt, according to court records. Johnson was not wearing a seat belt at the time she crashed into Gallentine in 2013 in Columbia County, but she was not cited for that instance. All of Johnson's

traffic citations were in Multnomah County and only four occurred since she was elected to the state House in 2000.

In lieu of answering questions or commenting on Johnson's actions, campaign spokesperson Jennifer Sitton questioned why news organizations would report on the incident. "This is literal ambulance chasing media doing the bidding of the party opposition researchers who are afraid of our campaign," Sitton said in an email.

On Johnson's campaign website, her "to-do list" includes "hold government accountable to deliver for the rest of us." She recently released a campaign ad focused on homelessness in Oregon, showing Johnson driving past people and tents in Portland. "We should expect personal responsibility," Johnson says.

Johnson is so far the most well-funded candidate for governor, with \$8.9 million raised, thanks to \$1.75 million from Nike co-founder Phil Knight and plentiful six-figure checks from other donors who typically support Republicans. That fundraising and support has made Johnson a threat to Democratic candidate Tina Kotek, former speaker of the state House, and Republican candidate Drazan, the former House minority leader, although both Kotek and Drazan can expect support from national groups including party associations.

Polling paid for and released by the Johnson campaign on Wednesday showed the candidate in second place just slightly behind Kotek, with Drazan in third.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Deschutes Historical Museum seeks vendors for antique fair

The Deschutes Historical Museum is seeking vendors to participate in its first outdoor antique fair in August.

On Aug. 20, the museum will hold an antique fair on the shaded lawn at the Deschutes Historical Museum at 129 NW Idaho Ave. The event will be free to the public and will include an antique identification event with food trucks available, from noon to 3 p.m., the museum said in a news release Thursday.

Vendors who offer a variety of quality antiques and collectibles, with no reproductions or replicas, can apply on the museum's website.

For more information, the museum can be reached by calling 541-389-1813 or by emailing info@deschuteshistory.org.

Driver crashes into bank downtown, cited for DUII

A 35-year-old Bend resident was arrested Thursday morning on suspicion of DUII after crashing her pickup truck into a downtown bank, Bend Police said.

Jessica Anne Cufley was taken by ambulance to St. Charles Bend for treatment of minor injuries after she was cited on suspicion of DUII, said Bend Police spokesperson Sheila Miller.

Around 8:39 a.m., Cufley allegedly left NW Wall Street and drove her silver Nissan truck into the Wells Fargo Bank, at 960 NW Wall St., police said.

The crash caused minor damage to the building. A fire marshal determined there was no structural damage, police said. Miller said she could not provide additional information about what Cufley was doing downtown.

"Unfortunately, we see DUIIs in all parts of town, at all hours of the day — morning, noon and night," Miller said.

Bend man cited for DUII in Tuesday night fatal crash

A Bend man is facing a drunken driving charge after he allegedly caused a crash Tuesday night that killed a Terrebonne motorcyclist.

Evan Borden, 28, was uninjured in the crash that claimed the life Rodney Miller, 51, according to a statement by Oregon State Police.

The wreck occurred around 8:35 p.m. Wednesday on state Highway 126 about two miles west of Redmond. According to an OSP crash reconstructionist, Borden was traveling east in a white Chevrolet Impala when he attempted to turn left into a pullout. He allegedly cut off a Kawasaki motorcycle driven by Miller, who struck the Impala's driver side door as the car was turning.

Miller was pronounced dead at the scene. Borden was cited by OSP for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving. On Thursday, he was not listed as an inmate of the Deschutes County jail and no charges were on file against him in Deschutes County Circuit Court.

Borden did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

The highway was closed for around five hours as police investigated. — Bulletin staff reports

OREGON

CDC shows declines in COVID community levels

Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson counties drop from high to medium levels

Bulletin staff report

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported reduced COVID-19 community levels in Oregon on Thursday, with 14 counties at high and 15 at medium, including three Central Oregon counties.

Seven counties dropped to low levels of community spread, according to data released Thursday.

A week ago, the agency showed no Oregon counties at low level, 12 at medium and 24 at high.

The CDC monitors levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the

latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

The CDC listed the following levels for Central Oregon: **Deschutes County:** Medium

Crook County: Medium **Jefferson County:** Medium Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with medium levels:

- If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your health care provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions.
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested if you have symptoms

— Bulletin staff report

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SPECIAL REPORT COMING SUNDAY IN THE BULLETIN

INDIGENOUS SURVIVORS: VOICES OF RESILIENCE

Voices of Resilience: Indigenous women across the country have endured disproportionately high rates of violence stemming from systemic and cultural obstacles: Mistrust, limited policing, a lack of resources for support services and a dizzying array of jurisdictional issues for crimes committed on tribal land are all factors. In a two-part investigative project in partnership with Underscore.news, a non-profit publication focused on Native American issues, the series will show how those obstacles prompted Indigenous survivors to use their stories of trauma to empower others, initiatives encouraging change and the policies shaping the legal landscape.

The Bulletin
EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY