

HEPPNER

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Governor recall petition gets signatures in Heppner

'Overwhelming positive response'



Sheila Miller of Lexington set up a recall petition table in Heppner last week. "I haven't been spending a lot of time by myself," she told the Gazette-Times. -Photo by David Sykes.

By David Sykes

A volunteer working to gather signatures to force a recall of Oregon Governor Kate Brown was in Heppner last week gathering signatures at the city park. Sheila Miller of Lexington said interest in signing the petition was high, with one couple even driving from Hermiston to sign because they had missed the opportunity to sign there. "I had people from Gresham who were driving by and saw the sign stop and sign," she said. Miller said she had heard nothing but positive response towards the recall effort and there was a line waiting to sign at the time.

The group "Flush Down Kate Brown" says they launched the effort because people are tired of Salem not listening to what people want. They say Salem is passing bills and tax measures without giving the people a chance to vote or have a voice. According to their website Flushdownkatebrown.com the group says, among other charges, that Brown is "negligent to address the homelessness issues, education issues and the employment issues. Oregon holds one of the lowest graduation rates in the nation," they say. The group has 90 days from filing to gather the necessary signatures to get the recall on the ballot.

The petition drive is affiliated with Oregon First! Political action committee founded by Michael Cross from the small town of Turner. The group claims to have a presence in every county in the state and has been using social media to spread the word about the recall effort.

The Heppner Gazette-Times reached out to several local elected

officials for their reaction to the recall effort. They were asked both if they had signed the petition, and for a comment on the effort. Neither Rep. Greg Smith nor Sen. Bill Hansell responded to the request. Local county commissioners were also asked, and they responded. None indicated they had signed the petition. "Without seeing the effort directly, I would just say at this point that the recall process is a strong way for the citizens to voice their opinions and perspectives. I hope that the work will be heard by the highest leadership in Salem and start a stronger statewide conversation," Commissioner Melissa Lindsay told the Gazette-Times.

Commissioner Don Russell did not indicate he had signed either and said, "First I'm not necessarily a fan of recalls and think they should be used in rare occasions specifically for illegal or unethical actions. Governor Brown has done neither. I did not vote for Kate Brown and don't support the vast majority of her agenda. She did however win the election and is doing what she told her base she would do. We, as an electorate, need to be more informed when we cast our vote," he said.

Commissioner Jim Doherty said, "A positive of the divisive and much publicized Oregon legislative session, has been the grassroots movement. Part of the reason I ran for commissioner was to advocate for those feeling marginalized. Folks lambasted the Republican senators for going to extreme measures

to stop an ill constructed carbon bill. They were not shirking their duty; they were representing the majority of their constituencies. Conversely, I visited with legislators from the metro region who thought it was too demanding of the rural community. The trouble was they too had voters to appease. We need to settle the pendulum of partisan politics. As it is, each time it swings it drifts us further apart.

I begin in November as the president of the Association of Oregon Counties. The 120 county judges and commissioners hold mostly non-partisan positions. We gather each month and work on challenges that effect people from a multitude of ideologies, we do so without the vitriol of state or federal lawmakers. We have to live and work with the people who entrusted us, there is no disconnect. I think people mobilizing will remind state policymakers from both sides of the aisle that it is necessary not just to listen but to hear those most affected," Doherty said. He added, "I went down to a Business Oregon meeting in Scappoose Thursday, then to central Oregon to behavioral health meetings over the weekend. There were recall petitions and a growing number of State of Jefferson signs." Doherty did not say if he had signed the petition.

As far the local petition signing effort, Miller said she plans to be at the upcoming fair and at the next Heppner First Friday event in August. "People are interested in this," she said.

Harvest off to slower start



Wheat harvest is taking place on the Jeff and Missy Cutsforth farm near Lexington. -Photo by David Sykes.

Morrow County Grain Growers grain merchandising/risk manager, Brian Peiler told the Gazette, "Morrow County harvest is underway but off to a slower start than normal. This year's crop matured

a bit uneven so producers are waiting for the wheat to totally ripen before getting started."

He added the wheat that has been taken in so far has been of good quality with test weights running above

60 pounds for SWW and around 62 pounds for HRW. Reported yields look to be above average on the early stuff. Early blush looks like an above average crop for both quality and yield.

How retiring Justice of Peace Spicer's position will be filled

It was reported in last week's Gazette-Times that Justice of the Peace Ann Spicer will be retiring. She is planning on leaving Dec. 31, 2019. Her six-year elected term would have ended on January 9, 2023, so an appointment will need to be made to fill the vacancy before a new Justice can be elected. The Governor, with input from the local

county commissioners, will appoint someone to fill that vacancy. Voters would then vote on a new justice at the May 19, 2020 election.

According to Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers, the first day candidates can file for the May 19 primary election would be after January 1, 2020. If two or more people file for

the position, they would all be on the primary ballot. The top two vote getters from the primary would then go on to the November general election. If, however, one of the candidates gets over 50 percent of the vote in the primary, they alone would go to the November general election and run unopposed.

Mosquitoes with West Nile virus found in Morrow County

West Nile virus, a mild flu-like disease spread by mosquitoes, has been detected in mosquitoes at a testing site in Morrow County, according to Oregon Public Health officials.

The mosquitoes, found near the city of Irrigon, are the first to test positive for the disease in Oregon in 2019. Health officials are advising people in Morrow County to take precautions against mosquitoes to avoid the risk of infection, including preventing mosquito bites.

"West Nile is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. About one in five infected people may show signs of West Nile virus. People at risk of serious illness include individuals 50 and older and people with immune-compromising conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure," cautions Shelley Wight, Communicable Disease Coordinator for Morrow County Public Health.

West Nile symptoms may include fever above 100 degrees and severe headache, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, shaking, paralysis or rash. People should contact their health care provider if experiencing any of these

symptoms.

The incubation period is usually two to 14 days. Rarely, infected individuals may develop an infection of the brain or spinal column that can be severe or may cause death. This is especially of concern to those who have a compromised immune system, or the elderly.

The number of mosquito pools - samples of about 50 mosquitoes - testing positive in any area could lead to infection. Dr. Emilio DeBess, veterinarian at the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division, recommends people and animals be protected against mosquito bites.

"It's very easy for people to prevent bites from mosquitoes that may carry West Nile virus," DeBess says. "Although the risk of contracting West Nile virus is low, people can take simple precautions to keep these insects at bay if they're headed outdoors."

DeBess offers these tips:

-Eliminate sources of standing water that are a breeding ground for mosquitoes. This includes watering troughs, bird baths, clogged gutters and old tires.

-When engaged in outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active, protect yourself by using mosquito repellents containing DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus or Picardin and follow the directions on the container.

-Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants in mosquito-infested areas.

-Make sure screen doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly.

In 2018, there were two human cases of West Nile virus in Harney and Clackamas counties. The virus was found in one bird, 58 mosquito pools - samples of about 50 mosquitoes each - and two horses. In 2017, seven humans, 92 mosquito pools, five horses and one bird tested positive for West Nile. The virus also can be found in chickens, squirrels and dogs.

Climate change effects such as increased temperature and changes in rainfall have led to longer mosquito seasons and are contributing to the spread of West Nile virus, health officials say. They agree these, and other climate change indicators must be considered to help people better prepare for future transmission of the disease.

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