

★ INSIDE: 2026 SPOKANE COUNTY ★

ELECTION GUIDE

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2026

House rematch comes with higher stakes

Baumgartner, Conroy clash again as shifting political winds, growing voter frustration put Eastern Washington's longtime GOP stronghold in play

By Emry Dinman
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Voters considering who will represent Eastern Washington in Congress for the next two years may experience a bout of déjà vu when they see their ballots, but a lot has changed since Michael Baumgartner and Carmela Conroy first competed for the seat in 2024.

Baumgartner handily defeated Conroy that November with over 60% of the vote, but before the night was over, Conroy already declared she would seek a rematch.

At least 10 people who also ran this year believed Conroy wasn't the right candidate to end 32 years of Republican control of the district, but only Spokane firefighter Nate Powell, an independent dark horse candidate backed by a sizable dark-money campaign, came anywhere close to replacing her on the ballot. In the end, with nearly 19% of the vote, Conroy cemented her place in the general election this fall.

While this vote share was eclipsed by Baumgartner's 47%, the incumbent was the only

See **5TH, 8**

MORE ON CONGRESS

IRAN WAR TAKES CENTER STAGE IN IDAHO SENATE RACE

Independent Todd Achilles challenges incumbent Sen. Jim Risch, who leads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. **NW, 1**

GRAY FIRE • AUGUST 18, 2023

PRICE OF STARTING OVER

Medical Lake residents reflect on costly road to recovery as more families face difficult decisions

Jason Steege stands on the porch of his family's rebuilt Medical Lake home Thursday. The Steeges' first home was destroyed in the Gray fire in 2023. To complete the new house, the family had to take out a large mortgage at a higher interest rate.



By Mathew Callaghan
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

The metallic clatter of wind chimes resonated across Jason Steege's wraparound concrete porch as he recalled the day his home burned to the ground.

He remembers the wind, but not thinking much of it until black smoke began billowing his way. He remembers when his wife, who was in Seattle at the time, called him on Aug. 18, 2023, as he was working his remote job in the basement.

"You need to leave now," she urged him.

So, Steege, dressed in sweats, flip-flops and a T-shirt, packed up the dogs and the cats with his adult daughter and went to a friend's house about a mile away. Fifteen minutes later, he tried to come back to grab more things, but it was too late.

"You could see the flames shooting over those – well, they used to be trees – and you could just see it somewhere around the road," Steege said. "I knew it didn't look good for our place."

A little more than three years after the Gray fire destroyed the home his wife bought when he was in the Air Force and deployed in Turkey in 2015, Steege is in a much newer and

JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

See **FIRE, 6**

GRIZZLY BEAR STRATEGY NEARS COMPLETION

OUTDOORS: Plan for Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem is expected to be up for final approval in December. **SPORTS, 8**

WOMEN CARVE OUT PLACE IN WASHINGTON WINE INDUSTRY

Female-owned wineries make up 11% of the state's total, and 18% had women in ownership or winemaking roles. **ARTS & LEISURE, 1**

COOL CRITTERS: NORTHERN FLICKERS BRING THE NOISE

Of the 11 woodpecker species that call Washington home, the red-shafted bird is the most likely to be seen – and heard. **NW, 1**

'The same result regardless'

INW families connected to Fort Hood shooting react to execution news

By Alexandra Duggan
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Former Inland Northwest families who had loved ones at Fort Hood during the country's deadliest military base shooting must face that day again as the government prepares to livestream the killer's execution.

Ex-Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan opened fire at the Texas base in 2009, killing 13 and injuring 32 – including 62-year-old Spokane native Michael Grant Cahill and Post Falls teenager George Stratton III.

Cahill was killed when he attempted to stop Hasan's rampage by charging at him with a chair, according to news reports at the time. Stratton was shot in the shoulder and

See **FORT HOOD, 6**



JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

George Stratton III, then 19, sits in his parents' backyard in Post Falls on July 7, 2010. He was injured from a bullet fired by Nidal Hassan at Fort Hood in November 2009.

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