

A look at the past week in the Ore. Legislature

By Jonathan J. Cooper
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Oregon lawmakers had a busy week, advancing dozens of bills and finalizing the budget as they prepare to adjourn the 2015 session in the coming days. Here's a look at some of the highlights from the past week:

A \$1.2 billion plan for debt-financed construction projects was unveiled. Despite a strong push by Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, it did not include money to renovate the state Capitol and retrofit the building to survive an earthquake.

It did, however, include more than \$200 million to improve earthquake safety in schools and public-safety buildings like police and fire stations. If the full Legislature and Gov. Kate Brown sign off, all seven universities will get new buildings or renovations, to the tune of \$300 million. The plan also includes millions for road construction, affordable-housing units and dozens of other projects.

Both the House and Senate signed off on a bill allowing recent high school graduates to qualify for a tuition waiver at Oregon community colleges.

The bill would provide the dollars needed to cover tuition where state and federal grants fall short. Students who graduated or got a GED certificate within six months of enrolling for community college courses could apply.

A separate bill would allow Oregon residents to qualify for state-funded

college scholarships, regardless of their immigration status. The measure sparked a heated debate in the House, where discussion was paused for half an hour and Rep. Chris Gorsek apologized for an outburst at two Republicans.

Lawmakers liked the idea of raising speed limits from 55 to 65 mph outside the city limits in Central and Eastern Oregon. Interstate 84 from The Dalles to Idaho would rise to 70 mph, as would all of U.S. 95 in the state's southeastern corner.

Another bill aimed at speeding the flow of traffic did not advance. The measure, which didn't survive a House vote, would have designated the left lane as a passing lane and allowed police to ticket slow-pokes who fail to move over for faster traffic.

Legislators revived a hotly contested bill that orders schools to publish information about the number of their students who have received exemptions from vaccine requirements.

Oregon has one of the highest rates of kindergarten students using a nonmedical waiver to opt out of one or more required vaccinations, with 5.8 percent of this year's kindergarten class entering school without some of their shots.

Some lawmakers, led by Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Portland, have been trying to reduce that rate, saying a high number of immunized students protects those who can't get the shots themselves, such as children with leukemia or suppressed immune systems.

LETTERS

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for healthy YEAR-ROUND exercise and mind-clearing recreation for people of ALL ages and physical abilities. Anything that can be done to get people, and especially our children, off their butts, away from their TVs and computers, and out of their gas-guzzling cars is good national and local health policy. Good policies and projects rarely come about without effort or controversy.

If you are compelled to help get 'er done, shoot me an email or visit www.blackbuttrail.com.

Kris Calvin
Tollgaters for the Trail
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To the Editor:

Regarding the paved trail connecting Tollgate to Black Butte and Sisters, I am wholeheartedly for it and I know many other Tollgate people who also are in favor of the trail.

Scare tactics like possible lawsuits are ridiculous. I wonder just what people who are against it really think, since so many alternative scary theories are presented.

It would be so lovely if people who can no longer ride two-wheeled bikes had a safe

route into Sisters from Tollgate or Black Butte Ranch.

Crossing Highway 20 is certainly not a safe alternative.

It makes me quite sad that there is such a negative attitude toward the trail. I guess that attitude is also prevalent in Sisters on other subjects, judging from the comments from the resigning City Council member recently. I know there are many positive people in our area; we happen to know many of them. It is time to hear from all the positive people.

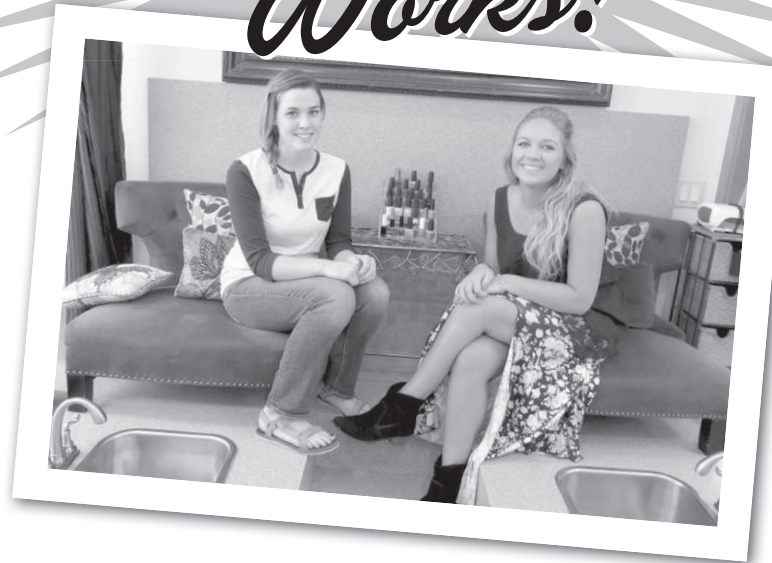
Sue Edgerton
Tollgate

To the Editor:

Cooking the books is not an honorable pastime. It appears that proponents of the Sisters to BBR trail have once again lit the stove. In a letter addressed to their website there is an assertion that the residents of Tollgate overwhelmingly supported the trail in a "survey" conducted in October 2013. (Emphasis on SURVEY. In no manner was this document ever referred to as a VOTE.) This survey contained none of the important information to elicit an intelligent, educated decision on the part of participants e.g. a map showing proximity to homesites; cost of the project;

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— Tami Jones, Owner *Metamorphosis Salon*

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