

**OBITUARIES**

**Nova Dea (Ross) Dibala**

June 4, 1935 — March 5, 2017

Nova was born June 4, 1935, in Liberal, Kansas. She passed away March 5, 2017, in La Pine.

Nova is survived by her beloved husband, Leo A. Dibala; sons Randy and Ronnie Scott; sisters LaDonna Christensen, Jeanie Stark, and Sharon Andres; six grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

**Thomas James Epping**

Sept. 20, 1946 — March 14, 2017

Thomas James Epping, 70, passed away in Salem at his residence.

He was born in the Silverton/Salem area to

Francis and Lillian (Diehl) Epping on Sept. 20, 1946.

Thomas was one of seven children. He went to school in Salem and Silverton. Thomas enjoyed spending time with his kids and all of his family. Camping, fishing and boating are among the many things he enjoyed doing in his free time. Thomas could make all those around him laugh.

He is preceded in death by his sons, Todd and David Epping, and his parents.

Thomas is survived by his children David (Brenda) Epping of McMinnville, Travis Epping of Grants Pass, Ryan Epping of Vancouver, Washington, and Morgan Kumlee and Shane Epping, both of Oroville, California; siblings Patrick Epping, Michael Epping, Janet Bur-

ton, Roberta Reser and Nancy Southwood; 11 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. He will be greatly missed by all of his family and those who knew him.

A celebration of life will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 1, at Scott's Mill Grange.

Arrangements by Unger Funeral Chapel, Silverton.

**Barbara Fay Speier**

March 3, 1929 — March 9, 2017

Barbara was born to Ted and Sarah Anderson on March 3, 1929, in Silverton. She was raised in Silverton with her five siblings. Summers were spent picking strawberries and hops. Barbara graduated from Silverton High

School in 1947. At the age of 18, she bravely traveled by bus to San Francisco and then spent 21 days on a freight liner to join her older sister Sylvia and brother-in-law living in the Philippines. After a year abroad, she returned to San Francisco. Barbara then started her first job as a switchboard operator. She met Alvin Speier via the switchboard and later in person at a company party. They were married June 20, 1953, and raised their two children in the Speier family home in Alameda, California. Barbara was a devoted wife, daughter-in-law, mother, sister, mother-in-law, friend, neighbor, hostess, aunt, grandmother and great-grandmother. She taught swimming to many children at the Lincoln Park Pool. Her days were busy with cooking, sewing, family activities and life-long friend-

ships. Barabara is survived by her husband of 63 years, Alvin Speier; daughter Dana (Dan) Funrue; son Brad (Denise) Speier; grandchildren Ryan (Bethany) Speier, Brandon (Angela) Speier, Brett Funrue and Kirsten (Thomas) Dionne, great-grandchildren Colson and Caleb Speier, and Claire and Noah Dionne; sister Sylvia Sommers; sister-in-law Marceen Speier; and numerous nieces and nephews.

At Barbara's request, no memorial service will be held.

Funeral mass will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday, March 23, with a rosary at

1:30 p.m., both at St. Paul Catholic Church in Silverton. Full obituary to follow.

Arrangements with Unger Funeral Chapel.

**Obituary Policy**

Free obituaries run on a space-available, first-come, first-serve basis, and are subject to editing. Maximum length is 250 words.

Photos may be submitted, but are not guaranteed to be published.

Paid obituaries are handled by advertising and are also subject to editing.

Deadline for obituaries is 11 a.m. Friday for publication the following Wednesday.

**To submit:** email [snews@salem.gannett.com](mailto:snews@salem.gannett.com), fax 503-399-6706 or call 503-399-6794.

# Advocates pushing for more school spending

**NATALIE PATE**  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Advocates for boosting education funding took center stage at the Capitol March 13, arguing through polling and voting results that Oregonians want more money spent on schools.

The current K-12 state budget is \$7.4 billion. While proposed budgets for the upcoming biennium — including the co-chairs budget of \$7.8 billion, the Governor's budget of \$8 billion, and the Oregon School Board's \$8.4 billion — would maintain current services for K-12 education, and in some cases expand services, it isn't clear how much the legislature will approve or exactly how it will be used.

The Oregon School Boards Association used poll results to push for more funding. More than 90 percent of Oregonians see K-12 public education as a top funding priority facing the state legislature and more than 60 percent support raising business taxes to avoid cutting school budgets, according to the poll.

The state is currently facing a \$1.6 billion budget shortfall for the 2017-19 biennium.

"Our state's voters are

looking for leadership on the issue of revenue reform," said Jim Green, executive director of the association. "We all know that taxes are always a tough subject for legislators, but for nearly a decade we've been balancing the state budget on the backs of our students.

"Our young people need better from us." Green said Oregon's economy is good, yet large cuts are being made concerning education.

"This makes no sense to me," he said.

Oregon currently pays about \$10,320 per student annually, ranking it 35th in the country.

This past fall, voters approved Measure 98, which calls for spending \$800 per high school student annually on career technical education, college-level classes, or drop-out prevention programs.

According to proponents of the measure, these opportunities for students will help raise the state's graduation rate, which currently at 74.8 percent is still third worst in the country.

"Voters made themselves clear last November," said Toya Fick, executive director of Stand for Children Oregon. "Now it's up to the legisla-

ture to turn this support into new opportunities for Oregon's high school students."

Measure 98 passed by almost a 2-to-1 margin, with more than 1.2 million voters supporting the measure.

As a statute and not a change to the state's constitution, the legislature can change the amount of money allocated and/or how the funds are implemented.

For instance, the measure designates funds to high school students due to the dropoff in performance in national assessments occurring after eighth grade.

If the legislature wanted, they could vote to expand it to lower grades, though some proponents of the measure said this "waters down" the measure and that it wouldn't be what the voters asked for.

If the legislature does not approve the amount voters wanted, other options may be considered, such as an increased tax on beer or tobacco to help pay the difference.

The Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee has been holding public hearings across the state for the past month, with the final hearing coming up Thursday at

the Capitol.

Considering this input, the subcommittees will continue to hear from agencies before they recommend a budget to the full committee. A revenue forecast is expected in May, which, along with any tax increases, could impact the proposed budgets.

The Oregon State Legislature is scheduled to end its session by July 10.

Since state funding for education is determined every other year, school boards operate at the start of each biennium under a veil of uncertainty, said Jay Remy, a spokesperson for the Salem-Keizer School District.

But while boards are familiar with picking a number to start working with on the budget long before the legislature decides, Remy said that isn't ideal.

This is especially true knowing the largest section of school budgets concerns the people they employ — will they have to fire or be able to hire?

Contact Natalie at [npate@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:npate@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6745, or follow her on Twitter @Nataliempate or on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/nataliepatejournalist](http://www.Facebook.com/nataliepatejournalist).

# Butte Creek robotics teams to compete in national championship

**CHRISTENA BROOKS**  
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

MT. ANGEL — Upper elementary school students in Butte Creek School's expanding robotics program will put the Bobcats on the national stage for a third time in the school's history.

Three Butte Creek teams — the Thunderbolts, the Robot Weirdos and the Psycho Robots — built, programmed and drove their robots so well in local competitions that they have been invited to compete at the CREATE U.S. Open Robotics Championship in Iowa in two weeks.

"These fourth and fifth graders are doing robotics for the very first time," said teacher and program coordinator Stacy Boost. "They have worked very hard since September."

Butte Creek middle schoolers competed at nationals twice — in 2014 and 2015 — but this is the Bobcats' first time competing in the elementary school division. They will meet teams from all over the U.S., as well as three teams from China, Boost said.

The students headed to nationals are Kailea Buckley, Scarlett Leiterman, Christian Meza, Edwyn Romero, Sarah

Kurns, Jessni Morris, Daniel Boru, Nikitha Zenuhin, Jacob Meyer, River Rodgers and Venedim Scherbakov.

VEX IQ Robotics requires three different competitions of the challengers, using their plastic and metal robot set and text-based software. They take on three challenges — a programmed task, a two-driver scenario, and an alliance of two teams working together to score as many points possible in 1 minute.

Butte Creek's teams are fundraising to earn \$8,000 to pay for their trip to nationals on April 4 in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Worlds is in Louisville, Kentucky at the end of April. By Friday, the Bobcats' GoFundMe page had generated \$400 in online donations. The teams also made money at bake sales, with fundraising letters, and by selling jewelry. Boost estimated that they are currently \$2,000 short of their goal.

Boost has been leading robotics at Butte Creek for 15 years. Helping her this year are adult mentors Gary Morris, a network architect for Intel, and Scott Blake, a U.S. Navy veteran.

More information can be found at <https://www.gofundme.com/butte-creek-vex-iq-robotics-to-iowa>.

# Oregon may let farmers sue Monsanto, other companies for crop contamination

**TRACY LOEW**  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Oregon lawmakers are considering a bill that would let farmers sue Monsanto, Scotts Miracle-Gro and other companies that hold patents on genetically engineered seeds if crops grown from those seeds contaminate traditional or organic crops. Cross-contamination from GE crops can make other crops worthless, and can ruin seed lines that have taken decades to develop, farmers told the House Judiciary Committee on Thursday.

Genetically engineered crops also can escape their fields and be-

come pests that are hard to eradicate — something that's happened with Scotts' genetically modified bentgrass, which now threatens Oregon's billion-dollar grass seed industry.

"Where there is harm or damage, there needs to be a remedy," said Sandra Bishop of Our Family Farms, a Medford-based nonprofit that advocates for traditional seed crops.

House Bill 2739 would allow landowners to seek three times actual economic damages if GE organisms are present on their land without permission.

It also would allow individuals to sue the corporations if GE orga-

nisms are found on land owned or occupied by a public body, such as a park, in the area where they live.

Opponents said allowing such lawsuits would stifle innovation.

"Without innovation, on my farm I'd probably still be using the back end of a mule for a compass," Oregon Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue said. "Does Oregon really want to be known as a technological desert?"

Also on Thursday, lawmakers considered a bill that would restore local control over genetically engineered crops.

In 2013, the Legislature passed a bill banning local governments from regulating crops or seeds. It exempted Jackson County, which already had a bill to ban GE crops on the ballot.

At the time, then-Gov. John Kitzhaber promised a state-level solution to the problem of GE crops contaminating conventional and organic crops.

That hasn't happened, the bill's proponents told the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"We were sort of led to believe that cross-contamination would somehow be addressed

through the Department of Agriculture," said Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, who co-sponsored the bill.

"If the state isn't going to figure out a way to have some GMO free zones to help protect this thriving part of the agriculture industry ... I think we ought to allow local government to have that control," Holvey said.

House Bill 2469 would again allow local jurisdictions to ban GE crops. It also would allow a ban on GE crops that was approved by Josephine County voters in 2014 to take effect.

Opponents of both the bills said neighboring farmers should be able to work together voluntarily and collaboratively to solve those problems.

"Co-existence does and has worked in Oregon," said Scott Dahlman, policy director for Oregonians for Food & Shelter.

Proponents said that doesn't work when the farm next door is leased to a multinational corporation or farmers are bound by contracts with those corporations.

Neither bill moved out of committee Thursday. [tloew@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:tloew@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6779 or follow at Twitter on [TraCyLoew](http://TraCyLoew)

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