

Life in the Valley



OREGON STATE FAIR: WHAT’S NEW?

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Roller coasters and deep-fried treats toward the end of August only means one thing. The 154th Oregon State Fair is returning to Salem for 11 days beginning Friday, Aug. 23. Tens of thousands will come to the Mid-Valley to experience the fair, running through Labor Day. **I** Many beloved attractions like Dog Town, All-Alaskan Pig Racing and the 60th annual Gerry Frank Chocolate Layer Cake Contest will be back. As well as dozens of rides and carnival games. **I** Big names including Dustin Lynch, 3 Doors Down, REO Speedwagon and The Commodores are coming to town to perform as part of the Columbia Bank Concert Series.

And if you’re looking for something new, here are some things you can expect this year:

Sea Lion Encounters

Watch as rescued sea lions balance balls, leap, jump and interact with trainers.

This educational marine conservation outreach experience is new to the Oregon State Fair and will be free with fair admission all 11 days.

The Wonderful World of Sawdust

This woodcarving experience — showcasing lumberjacks and chainsaw artists — is located in the gardens.

There will be entertainment, storytelling and ax throwing every night, as well as Oregon craft beer, s’ mores and barbecue.

It also features the Paul Bunyan Lumber Jack Show and the Bear Hollow Wood Carvers.

Belt Buckle Battle

A rodeo battle like never before.

Four teams of rodeo professionals are in it to win it, and spectators must choose a team to root for before the battle begins. Seating in the Pavilion is determined by which color you choose:

- The Patriots wear red jerseys
- The Legends wear blue jerseys
- The Outsiders wear yellow jerseys
- The Renegades wear green jerseys

Meet and greets will be available before the competition, which is at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24, and free with admission.

Other new attractions include Jarípeo Espectacular, a Mexican bull riding competition, the 2019 Monster Truck Northwest Championships and the Oregon State Fair Demolition Derby Championship.

Visit oregonstatefair.org for more information.

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Say 'no' to Oregon School Board Assoc. proposal



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School board members are elected to run a public structure - the school district - that many people in a community rightly have opinions about and interact with almost daily for nine months of the year.

Schools are at the heart of a community, especially small and rural communities like Silverton.

That’s why it’s not only one of the most important elected offices, but also one of the toughest elected offices you can hold in Oregon.

For example, while few people can describe what the state treasurer or secretary of state oversees and does, many in the community have strong opinions about what their school board does and how well their schools are doing.

With so many constituents interacting with the district every day for so much of the year, board members’ communication with constituents is important if board members are to be effective community leaders and public officials.

Before email, when a parent or taxpayer wrote a board member, their letters would land at the district office where a staff person would decide who should receive and respond to the correspondence and who should not.

Today, with email, people are able to bypass the district filter, and contact their board members directly.

Some of the correspondence board members receive is better handled by school administrators and teachers. But even those emails provide important insight into constituent experiences and concerns which then can help board members when deliberating about school district policies and overseeing the superintendent.

Communications from constituents make for a better and more effective board member and district.

So, I was shocked when I learned the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA - www.osba.org) is suggesting to

school boards across the state that they should stop publishing board members’ district email addresses on the districts’ webpages and instead post a single address which will direct all constituent emails to an administrative assistant who will decide who should read it - the full board, an individual board member, a teacher, an administration manager or staff person.

The OSBA says they want to go back to the “old school” way of handling correspondence to protect board members from being burdened by issues that OSBA believes are best left to school superintendents and their staff.

Fair enough. But those types of emails can and are forwarded on to administrators.

School boards and the OSBA should not make it more difficult for the public to directly reach their elected officials.

In addition to negatively affecting public participation in their schools, OSBA’s suggested change makes no provision for reporting to the elected board members on the nature of email com-

plaints and comments or whether the issues raised in correspondence were properly addressed.

In short, OSBA is trying to clip the wings of elected board members while simultaneously shoring up the power of superintendents (the board members’ employee) and undermining public participation in school district affairs.

School boards should be doing all they can to make it easy to hear from constituents, instead of adopting short-sighted policies that limit the voice of the people who voted them into office.

I hope the Silver Falls School District board – and other school boards in Oregon – will say “no” to OSBA.

Being a school board member is hard work, and the last thing they need is less involvement from constituents or a power play by superintendents and other administrators.

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