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Some utilities revive shut-offs

Say disconnects motivate customers to reach out for assistance

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Like many small utility companies, Salem Electric had tens of thousands of dollars earmarked to help its customers struggling financially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Months into the crisis, though, a number of its customers were falling farther behind on their bills and not contacting the electrical co-op that provides power to much of West Salem, Keizer and downtown Salem.

It's solution was to lift its moratorium on disconnections.

In normal times, disconnection, or at least the threat of it, is the last resort for utility companies or providers to compel people to pay their bills or at least get them to engage in discussion about paying.

Though the publicly-owned utilities like Portland General Electric, Pacific Power and NW Natural continue to hold off on disconnections, Salem Electric and other small utilities like Ashland and the Eugene Water & Electric Board have resumed the practice.

Salem Electric general manager Tony Schacher said the number of customers who reached out for assistance has jumped since it resumed disconnects July 13.

In the months of March through June, Salem Electric customers received an average of \$13,000 per month in assistance. After resuming disconnections in July, that jumped to \$86,000.

Schacher declined to say how many of approximately 20,000 customers of the member-owned co-op have been disconnected.

See UTILITIES, Page 3A



A wind turbine farm owned by PacifiCorp near Glenrock, Wyo. Western U.S. electrical utility PacifiCorp plans to move faster away from coal-fired power while getting more juice from the sun and wind, the company announced Oct. 3, 2019.

MATT YOUNG, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Boating deaths highest since 1993



Gary Messer launches his boat, the Crystal Marie, at Wallace Marine Park. The number of boating-related fatalities has reached near-record levels in 2020. BRIAN HAYES/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Most victims were not wearing life jackets

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

It has been a deadly year on Oregon's lakes and rivers.

The state has recorded 22 deaths involving boats this year, the most since 1993 and nearing the record of 25 with plenty of warm weeks remaining.

August was a particularly bad month, with eight fatal accidents on its own; the most recent came last weekend when a man charged with boating under the influence slammed into a 13-year-old swimmer at

See BOATING DEATHS, Page 4A



Life jackets are available for people to use at stations along the Willamette River in parks such as Riverview City Park in Independence.

ABIGAIL DOLLINS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Marion County settles sexual bias suit

Lyons woman receives \$300,000 in settlement

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Marion County has agreed to pay over \$300,000 to settle a sexual discrimination lawsuit filed by a long-time employee.

Jamie Namitz filed suit against the county, former county chief administrative officer John Lattimer and her former manager Don Newell in district court in February, alleging Newell said her "greatest asset" was her "sexuality" and he would be concerned if he



Namitz

promoted her, the crew wouldn't listen to her or respect her.

The county agreed to pay Namitz \$250,001 for damages and \$61,400 for attorneys' fees and costs on Aug. 19 after a settlement conference, and it was approved by the Marion County Commissioners Wednesday.

Namitz, who lives in Lyons, came forward publicly in October 2018, testifying to the county commissioners that Newell discriminated against her based on her sex during a job interview in August 2018.

Newell left the employ of the county days later.

According to the lawsuit, Namitz was hired by Mar-

See BIAS, Page 3A



Oregon State Sen. James Manning at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza in Eugene, Oregon on August, 31, 2020. Manning is the only former police officer in the Senate well as the only former police officer in the Legislature who is Black.

ANDY NELSON, THE REGISTER-GUARD

Oregon lawmakers who are former cops see need for reform

Connor Radnovich

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

As protests against police brutality of Black people and calls for reform continue, disagreements seen nationally over how to proceed are reflected in the handful of former law enforcement officers now serving as lawmakers in the Oregon Legislature.

While all shared the desire for police departments to improve training and relationships with the public, they differed over the immediacy of reforms, the role of the Legislature and support for the "defund the police" movement.

Those who back more significant reforms remain concerned about demonizing police officers and perpetuating a growing distrust between the public and those who are sworn to protect them.

There also is the perpetual issue of ensuring new laws are narrow enough to avoid unintended consequences, but still have the desired effect. This can be difficult when legislating with speed.

Already this year lawmakers needed to revisit a proposal to ban chokeholds after the first bill didn't achieve what the chief sponsors hoped it would.

"We're the Legislature, unintended consequences are the biggest thing we have to deal with," said Rep. Ron Noble, R-McMinnville. "But we can't be paralyzed and be afraid to make a choice and be afraid to do anything."

Seven police reform bills passed the Legislature during two special sessions called this summer, all with bipartisan support. However, even strong supporters of that legislation said the bills mostly just updated Oregon's statutes to where law enforcement already practiced.

An interim legislative committee met Thursday to discuss an additional eight bills, which could be introduced in 2021 or a special session this fall. The bills addressed issues including crowd control techniques; police officer uniforms; statewide databases for officer misconduct; and qualified immunity.

Three committee members are former police officers — Noble, Rep. Rick Lewis, R-Silverton, and Sen. James Manning Jr., D-Eugene. Other members of the Legislature who formerly served in law enforcement include Rep. Sherrie Sprenger, R-Scio, Rep. Chris Gorsek, D-Troutdale, Rep. Jeff Barker, D-Aloha, and Rep. Carla Piluso, D-Gresham.

Manning is the only former police officer in the Senate, as well as the only former police officer in the Legislature who is Black. This gives him a unique perspective, even when compared to the other former police officers.

"If you have never felt fear because of the way you look, you don't know what it's like to be afraid, to walk down your neighborhood, to see a police car pull up beside your or slow down in your neighborhood," Manning said. "That is fear, and it's real."

While he wanted to be a police officer since he was young, it was an incident of racial profiling when he was in fifth grade that motivated him to join.

Manning and a friend were walking back to his house when an officer pulled them aside and questioned them about using a hammer to break into parking meters. Manning didn't know what the offi-

See REFORM, Page 4A

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