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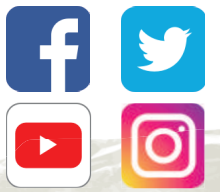
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Art by Amanda Weisbrod/The Observer

State BAC limit may fall to .05

■ Bill proposed by a state senator would make Oregon the second state to have a BAC limit under .08

By Max Denning
The Observer

As state legislators opened the 2019 legislative session last week, thousands of bills were introduced by lawmakers covering a wide swath of issues. Among them, a bill introduced by Senate President Peter Courtney proposes lowering the drunk driving limit from .08 blood alcohol content to .05. The law has support from the governor's office and would give Oregon the strictest DUI law in the country along with Utah, which lowered its limit to .05 in December 2018.

Utah began enforcing its new limit for driving under the influence on Dec. 30. With less than a month of implementation, it's unclear what the results will be. The law does have some high-profile organizational support. The National Traffic Safety Board has long supported lowering the limit to .05. A fact sheet published by the NTSB argues lowering the limit discourages those who have had an alcoholic beverage from driving.

"A .05 BAC law has a broad deterrent effect because it helps prevent

drinking drivers from getting behind the wheel in the first place (it does not necessarily result in more DUI arrests)," the document states.

Another report by the NTSB claims the law could severely reduce car crashes. The report shows drivers with a BAC of at least .05 are seven times more likely to be in a fatal crash than drivers who have not had anything to drink. The report predicts passing this law could decrease fatal crashes by 11 percent.

A report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states 70 percent of fatalities involving alcohol included at least one driver with a blood alcohol content of .15 percent or higher.

In 1983, Oregon and Utah became the first states to decrease the legal drinking limit from .10 to .08. In other countries such as Australia, Japan and the vast majority of Europe, .05 has long been the legal limit.

Courtney told The Oregonian he expects passing the law to be difficult.

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Wolf protection, estate tax elimination and new crime legislation introduced

By Max Denning
The Observer

The 2019 Oregon legislative session opened last Tuesday, and in the first week, more than a thousand bills were introduced by legislators. With Democrats holding a super majority in both the state house and senate, Republicans may find it difficult to pass laws they sponsor.

That isn't deterring Rep. Greg Barreto (R-Cove), who is the chief sponsor of nine bills. Barreto, the owner of Barreto Manufacturing in La Grande, said he believes his bills will have some success.

One of Barreto's priorities is working to eliminate Oregon's

estate tax. Currently, any estate worth more than \$1 million is taxable. The estate tax is graduated, beginning at 10 percent and climbing to 16 percent for estates worth more than \$8.5 million. Barreto noted Oregon is one of only 15 states with an estate tax.

"There have been issues with farm succession and businesses, and the estate tax hurts all of that," he said.

Barreto said with lots of talk of revenue reform currently in the legislature, tax reform is a good fit, and he would like it to be on the docket.

Among Barreto's priorities are two bills

See **Bills** / Page 5A

Conservation easement guarantees protection of 175 acres of East Moraine

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The Wallowa Land Trust's goal of conserving the moraines of Wallowa Lake is 175 acres closer to reality.

According to a press release from the Wallowa Land Trust, landowner Anna Mae Quint has voluntarily extinguished all future development and sub-division rights on her 175-acre East Moraine property.

The Moraines of Wallowa Lake are considered one of North America's most perfectly formed and best preserved glacial landscapes, according to the Wallowa

Land Trust's website. This ancient but fragile landform is visually stunning, physically accessible and scientifically important. The Wallowa Lake Basin's Moraines system is composed of three physiographic units: the East, West and Terminal Moraines.

The Quint property encompasses two lateral moraines before rising to the crest of the East Moraine at its westernmost boundary, where it abuts the Ham Family Conservation Easement, a 52-acre easement completed by the Ham family and the Wallowa Land Trust in 2017. The Ham and Quint conser-



Contributed photo

The Wallowa Land Trust has been working to conserve the land in the East Moraines. Recently, they were able to acquire 175 acres from Anna Mae Quint.

vation easements are part of a larger effort to conserve nearly 2,500 acres across Wallowa Lake's East and Terminal Moraines.

According to Eric Greenwell, conservation program manager at the Wallowa

Land Trust, the organization was formed in 2004. Originally a governing body of volunteers, it was formed to protect the moraines from commercial development.

The Trust is looking to

See **Conservation** / Page 2A



Courtesy photo

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates about 30 wolves live in Baker County.

Decision to reimburse ranchers for depredation postponed

By Casey Crowley
WesCom News Service

A Baker County Committee had to postpone a decision on whether to give money to ranchers who had cattle killed by wolves last year.

The Baker County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee did recommend during its Wednesday meeting that the state distribute \$23,500 to four Panhandle ranchers to help them hire range riders — employees who follow cattle herds to help protect them from wolves.

Although Baker County has just \$12,000 available for range riders, the state sometimes has unused money from other counties.

The Baker County committee recommended the state award \$14,000 to Chad DelCurto, who had the most confirmed cattle losses to wolves during a string of attacks in April 2018. Wolves from the Pine Creek Pack killed three of DelCurto's calves and injured four others.

DelCurto did not apply for compensation for the cattle, however.

Other requests for money for range riders are \$3,800 from the Pine Valley Ranch (which had one calf killed by wolves in April), \$2,800 from Devin Thompson and \$2,800 from Barry DelCurto.

The committee couldn't award

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Baxter

"It is nice to have an upward trend. It shows that something significant is going on," said LHS Principal Brett Baxter.

Baxter said the increase reflects many things, including the high school's efforts to align curriculum with state standards.

The LHS principal also said there appears to be a strong correlation with the La Grande School District's rising graduation rate and the creation of the school District's Professional Learning Communities program about seven years ago. The PLC program facilitates educators working together to develop individualized data-driven strategies to help students.

LHS's graduation numbers, upon closer inspection, look as solid as the concrete pillars supporting the roof over its main entrance. The stats indicate LHS has strong graduation numbers across the board in 11 sub-categories, including special education, students from economically disadvantaged families and students for whom English is a second language.

Students in all 11 of these categories had graduation rates of at least 80 percent, Baxter said.

Student improvement in the special education category has been particularly impressive, rising from a 59.3

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
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41/25
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La Grande, Oregon

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