

# LOCAL BRIEFING

From staff reports

## LHS Class of '64 meets for lunch Saturday

LA GRANDE — The members of the La Grande High School Class of 1964 will meet for lunch at noon May 25 at the Flying J Restaurant outside La Grande. An incorrect date was previously published.

## Meet the new owners of the Imnaha Store & Tavern

IMNAHA — On May 25, the Imnaha Store & Tavern

ern, 2 Hat Point Road, will host live music by Country Moonshine from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The duo performs a multitude of genres focusing on Country Western dance music and classic rock 'n' roll. All are welcome to come out for a night of music and food and greet the new owners, Cody and Brooke.

## Community invited to Memorial Day ceremony

SUMMERVILLE — A military-style Colors Cer-

emony will take place at Summerville Cemetery beginning at 8 a.m. sharp on Memorial Day. The May 27 service honoring veterans is open to the community.

## Cove Methodist Church serves Memorial Day lunch

COVE — The Cove United Methodist Church will continue its tradition of serving a lunch for the community on Memorial Day. Sandwiches, salad and homemade pie will be

served beginning at 11 a.m. on May 27 at the church on Jasper St. The lunch will be sold à la carte, with items ranging from \$1 to \$4. All are welcome.

## Health Speaker Series features Office of Rural Health

LA GRANDE — The public is invited to join Northeast Oregon Area Health Education Center for the final Health Speaker Series event of the academic year on May 28. The presenta-

tion begins at 5 p.m. in Eastern Oregon University's Huber Auditorium. Stacey Reed, program manager of recruitment services for the Oregon Office of Rural Health will provide details about lucrative scholarship and loan repayment opportunities for students pursuing health careers in rural or frontier Oregon.

## Cove seniors invited to annual picnic

COVE — The June 4 Cove senior lunch at

Founders Hall on the Ascension school grounds will be the final meal until next September. This will be the annual summer picnic, featuring hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, potato salad, coleslaw and baked beans, with an ice cream sundae bar for dessert. Coffee and tea are available at noon and the meal begins at 12:15 p.m. To RSVP, call Imie Bristow at 541-568-4545 or Betsy Arnson at 541-568-4902 by May 30.

# US withdraws train crew proposal that came after explosions

By Matthew Brown  
The Associated Press

BILLINGS — The Trump administration said Thursday it was withdrawing a proposal for freight trains to have at least two crew members, nullifying a safety measure drafted under President Barack Obama in response to explosions of crude oil trains in the U.S. and Canada.

A review of accident data did not support the notion that having one crew member is less safe than multi-person crews, Department of Transportation officials said. The withdrawal also seeks to pre-empt states from regulating crew sizes.

The 2016 proposal followed oil train derailments including a runaway oil train in 2013 that derailed, exploded and killed 47 people while leveling much of the town of Lac Megantic, Canada. Other derailments of trains carrying oil and ethanol have occurred in North Dakota, Oregon, Montana, Illinois, Virginia and other states.

Under Obama, regulators concluded that having two or more crew members would be worth the extra cost even if it prevented a single accident.

The rail industry, which long maintained that crew requirements were unnecessary, cheered Thursday's move.

But a representative for a rail workers union said it would put the public at greater risk by removing a safeguard against accidents. Most trains currently operate with at least two crew

members but without a government regulation there's no guarantee that would continue indefinitely.

"If railroads would start running single person operators, there's nobody up there to interact to make sure everything is done right," said John Risch, legislative affairs director for SMART Transportation Division, a rail workers union.

"The government has essentially said we're not going to provide any oversight whatsoever. Whatever the railroads want to do, they can do," Risch said.

The Federal Railroad Administration said in a statement that the rail industry has "maintained a strong safety record in the absence of regulation on this issue."

The statement also said a crew staffing rule would have would have been "an unnecessary obstacle" to future innovation in the industry.

Thursday's withdrawal marks the latest rollback since President Donald Trump took office of safety rules adopted under Obama in the face of opposition from the energy and transportation industries.

The administration this month eased inspection requirements for offshore oil and gas drilling put in place after the deadly 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. And transportation officials had earlier rescinded a requirement for more advanced electronic brakes for trains hauling crude



WesCom News Service File Photo

Several explosions were reported at the site of a crude oil train derailment in North Dakota in 2013 as some cars on the mile-long train caught fire.

and other hazardous fuels.

Railroad company representatives said the withdrawn crew rule would have locked them into crew sizes at a time when the industry is expanding the use of new technologies such as positive train control. Those are computer-based systems that can automatically stop trains to prevent accidents caused by high speed or collisions.

"Allowing railroads the flexibility to adjust their operations to reflect the capabilities of technologies like PTC (positive train control) will help advance railroads' mission to achieve an accident-free future," Association of American Railroads President and CEO Ian Jeffries said. ■

# Senate approves cut to public employee retirement benefits

By Sarah Zimmerman  
The Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Senate sent the House a short-term pension fix Thursday cutting public employee retirement benefits, a politically difficult vote for Democrats who say they were forced to choose between slashing benefits or letting employer interest rates rise.

Ultimately, some who were originally against the proposal reluctantly came around, saying higher interest rates would eat into budgets and lead to layoffs in the public sector.

"My heart is broken today because my back is against the wall," said Sen. James Manning, Jr., a Democrat who voted yes after signaling his opposition earlier this week. "I have two worlds that are colliding today — how do I respond?"

The plan, which the Senate approved by a 16 to 12 vote Thursday, essentially refinances the \$25 billion in debt incurred from the Public Employee Retirement System, known as PERS. It extends the state's repayment period from 20 to 22 years, which is meant to shield employers from an impending interest rate

hike in the upcoming years.

More controversially, the measure also redirects 2.5% of employee salary toward PERS. That translates to a 7 to 12% cut to employees' secondary retirement account, which is a 401(k) type plan meant to supplement the public pension.

*“These unfair and illegal reductions are a betrayal of Oregon values.”*  
— John Larson, President of the Oregon Education Association

Sen. Tim Knopp, a Bend Republican, stressed this "is not a permanent solution," and there needs to be more legislative action if the state wants to substantially pay down the debt.

Senate Minority Leader Herman Baertschiger, Jr., who was the public face of a Republican walkout over perceived Democratic inaction on PERS, voted against the measure but said in a statement that it was the "first step to remedying the unfunded liability that has been a detriment to our state."

The plan garnered fierce opposition from unions, who have bashed the idea of cutting benefits since the plan was publicly released a few weeks ago.

"The Oregon Senate has voted to reduce the retirement security and compensation for educators, firefighters and all public employees," said John Larson, President of the Oregon Education Association, the state's largest teacher's union. "These unfair and illegal reductions are a betrayal of Oregon values."

Some Democrats against the measure echoed those comments on the floor, saying that PERS employees — which include teachers, firefighters and child welfare workers — don't have a large enough salary to weather more cuts.

Sen. Sara Gelser, a Democrat from Corvallis, said refinancing the debt only "kicks the can down the road" and that all residents of the state should be responsible for this problem since everyone benefits from public services.

"We should not put that debt on a small group of people," said Gelser. "It's not a fair solution, it's not a real solution." ■

## OBITUARIES

### Lloyd F. Clark

Elgin  
Lloyd F. Clark, of Elgin, 89, died March 1 at his home. A memorial service, followed by a celebration of life, will begin at 11 a.m. June 8 at the Elgin Community Center. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory is handling the arrangements.

### Levi Owen

La Grande  
Levi Owen, 20, of La Grande, died May 22 at his residence. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory will be handling the arrangements.

### Kenneth Ashburn

Union  
1949-2019  
Kenneth Ashburn, 71, of Union, died May 8 at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho. No services are planned. His wishes were for his family to spread his ashes throughout the country.



Joe Horst

side.  
Known as Ken, he was born July 16, 1949, in Montevideo, Minnesota. He later moved to California and Oregon, where he graduated from Hillsboro High School. Ken loved competing in track, football and high school rodeo.  
On Sept. 1, 1967, Ken married his high school sweetheart, Vicki Kimmel. Together, Ken and Vicki loved going to rodeos and riding their motorcycle. Ken enjoyed spending time in nature, fishing, hunting and taking scenic drives through the countryside.  
Ken worked in manufacturing for 35 years, until he retired in 2002 due to health issues. When he wasn't working or out in nature, Ken was spending time with his family.  
Surviving relatives include his wife of 51 years, Vicki Ashburn of Union; mother, Barbara Ashburn of La Grande; son, Timothy Ashburn of Cove; daughter, Cindy of Colorado; grandchildren and great-grandchildren in

Colorado, Utah and Oregon; siblings, Ron of Elgin and Beverly of Union; and nieces and nephews in Oregon and Washington.

### Ruby Stanger

La Grande  
Ruby Stanger, 79, of La Grande, died May 23 at a local care facility. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory will be handling the arrangements.

### Marjorie Ettinger

La Grande  
Marjorie Ettinger, 94, of La Grande, died May 23 at her home. An obituary is forthcoming. Arrangements are under the direction of Daniels-Knopp Funeral Cremation & Life Celebration Center.

### Myrna Potts

La Grande  
Myrna Potts, 85, of La Grande, died May 22 at her home. An obituary is forthcoming. Arrangements are under the direction of Daniels-Knopp Funeral Cremation & Life Celebration Center.

**UPCOMING FUNERALS AND VISITATIONS**  
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**May 25**  
**Marolyn Smith:** 10 a.m., memorial service, La Grande Valley Fellowship Church.

**June 8**  
**Lloyd F. Clark:** 11 a.m., memorial service and celebration of life, Elgin Community Center.

**MENU**

**UNION COUNTY SENIOR CENTER**  
1504 N. ALBANY ST., LA GRANDE  
**LUNCH MENU**  
MAY 27-31  
Served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
First-time visitors age 60 and older eat free  
MONDAY: closed for Memorial Day  
TUESDAY: spaghetti with meat sauce, steamed vegetables, Caesar salad, garlic bread, fresh fruit.  
WEDNESDAY: Customer Appreciation Day — free lunch of pork roast and baked apples for everyone age 60 and older.  
THURSDAY: chicken Alfredo, steamed vegetables, salad greens, bread, fresh fruit.  
FRIDAY: Reuben sandwiches, potato salad, cashew-pea salad, fruit slices.

## PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

### UNION COUNTY SHERIFF

Cited: Jack Johnson, 79, Cove, was cited on a charge of theft of services.  
Arrested: Jerry Leroy Keagle, 28, North Powder, was arrested on a warrant charging failure to appear in court on charge of failure to perform duties of a driver-property damage.  
Cited: Tyler Lee Hopwood, 19, La Grande, was cited on charges reckless driving and reckless endangering.  
Arrested: Dalton Chase Tanzey, 24, unknown address, was arrested on a Union County warrant charging a probation violation. The alleged probation violation was connected to an original charge of first-degree burglary.  
Accident: Nobody was injured in a traffic accident Wednesday at Foothill Road and McAlister Road. The accident was reported at 6:27 p.m.

### LA GRANDE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Cited: Nathaniel J. Odegaard, 20, La Grande, was cited on a charge of being a minor in possession of intoxicants.  
Accident: Nobody was injured in a traffic accident at Fifth Street and F Avenue on Monday. The accident was reported at 7:57 a.m.  
Arrested: Alexander W. Dooley, 20, unknown address, was arrested on a charge of a probation violation.  
Arrested: Robert James Recor, 51, unknown address, was arrested on a Union County

warrant. The warrant was for an alleged probation violation connected to an original charge of contempt of court.

Accident: Nobody was injured in a traffic accident Friday on Highway 203 about two miles east of La Grande. The accident was reported at 9:15 a.m.

Arrested: Richard Paul Vitale, 18, unknown address, was arrested on charges of third-degree rape, third-degree sexual abuse and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Arrested: Damon A. Preuss, 26, unknown address, was arrested on charges of possession of a controlled substance-meth, second-degree escape, resisting arrest, giving false information to an officer and on a parole and probation detainer.

Arrested: Robert Allen Fox, 57, unknown address, was arrested by the Pendleton Police Department on a Union County warrant charging failure to appear in court on a charge of driving under the influence of intoxicants.  
Retraction: Hannah Elizabeth Volter, 28, unknown address, was arrested on May 13 by the La Grande Police Department on a Multnomah County warrant. She was not charged with possession of heroin.

### LA GRANDE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Firefighters responded to six calls for medical assistance on Monday, nine on Tuesday and Wednesday, and six on Thursday.

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