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Good day to our valued subscriber Daryl Hawes of Elgin

Gov. Brown claims possible vetoes are not political game

By **Aubrey Wieber**
and **Claire Withycombe**
Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown announced Sunday that she is considering using her veto power to kill proposals championed by rural lawmakers of both parties.

Her staff said the veto threat was not political revenge but over sincere concerns about legislation

passed in the 2019 Legislature.

Brown is considering axing policies to make it easier to remove and fill ground from wetlands, move forward on the retrofit of two dams in Newport and provide money to help Eastern Oregon counties plan larger urban growth boundaries.

Some of the proposed action goes against Democrats who opposed

her cornerstone environmental policy that would have created a carbon pricing system. When asked if she plans to use veto power for retribution, Brown told a Politico reporter that "revenge is a dish best served cold and slowly."

However, Brown's spokeswoman said Monday the veto consideration is a policy move, not a political game.

Brown's deadline to veto comes Friday, and she had to give five days notice before making the decision. Several people who support proposals Brown is looking to kill said they hope to meet with the governor and overcome her veto threat. Brown has not yet vetoed anything from the 2019 session.

House Bill 2437 would increase the amount of material commercial

developers can remove from a wetland without a permit by 60 times what is now allowed, going from 50 cubic yards to 3,000. It also would increase the amount of dredged material that can be dumped in a wetland without a permit.

Brown's announcement was cheered by environmental group WaterWatch.

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Major general to speak at Sept. event

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

One of the best known generals in recent Oregon history is set to make an appearance in La Grande.

Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees will be the keynote speaker at the Reunion Weekend of La Grande's National Guard unit, the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment. Rees will speak Sept. 15 during a dinner at the Blue Mountain Conference Center.

Rees served as Oregon's adjutant general four times during his career. His first stint began in 1989 when he was appointed by Oregon's governor. His final stint began in 2009 when he was appointed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski, and he served four years.

As adjutant general, Rees was responsible for providing the state of Oregon and the United States with a ready force of citizen soldiers and airmen, equipped and trained to respond to any emergency or situation, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rees is credited with being instrumental in getting new National Guard armories built throughout Oregon including in La Grande. The current local armory was built about 15 years ago, said retired National Guardsman Lou Gerber of La Grande, who is helping organize Reunion Weekend.

Gerber said Rees is known for his ability to connect with
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Dick Mason/The Observer

Members of the Eastern Oregon University chapter of SEIU Local 503, the union representing student services workers, participate in a rally Monday.

SERVICE WORKERS RALLY

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

Stalled contract negotiations may spur workers who provide student services at Oregon's state universities, including the approximately 130 employed at Eastern Oregon University, to strike.

Members of the Eastern Oregon University chapter of SEIU Local 503, the union representing the student services workers, were told Monday they should be ready to vote to support a strike.

"If you are not ready to strike, then you should be ready to take what they give us," said Rob Fullmer of Portland State University, a leader of the negotiating team for student services workers at Oregon's state universities, to EOU's student services workers Monday afternoon.

Fullmer told EOU student services employees this before they began a march around the Hoke Union Building and up to Inlow Hall while

carrying picket signs and chanting for support from Eastern officials.

The chants included "You can't break our union down, La Grande is a union town," and "What do we want? Fair contract. When do we want it? Now!"

Economic issues are the primary reason contract talks, which began about five months ago, are at an impasse. The employees union is seeking a contract that would provide base wage increases of 4.5% retroactive to July 1 of this year and another that would take effect July 1, 2020.

The universities are offering two base wage increases of 0.5%. One would take effect Jan. 1, 2020, and the second would kick in Jan. 1, 2021.

Fullmer said increases of 0.5% in 2020 and 2021 would not come close to helping worker wages keep up with inflation. He said that even during the recession of a decade ago, when inflation was very low, it still topped 0.5% a year.

Jo Hickerson, president of the EOU chapter of SEIU Local 503, said the

pay increase offer from the universities is unacceptable.

"We cannot afford to lose buying power," Hickerson said.

Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for university advancement, said he hopes a settlement can be reached that meets the needs of both parties. He stressed that university officials are sensitive to the needs of classified staff workers.

"We very much value our classified employees who are part of the SEIU. They are an integral part of running all of the universities, and play a key role in student success. We work hard to support our staff while also keeping access, affordability and success of students at the forefront of our decisions," Seydel said.

Strikes involving student services workers at Oregon's state universities, which are legal under Oregon labor law when the proper process is followed, are relatively rare. Fullmer said

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Forest service to limit fire's growth

By **Jayson Jacoby**
EO Media Group

Forest Service officials decided to have a helicopter dump water on part of a fire in the Eagle Cap Wilderness Monday and Tuesday, but their goal is to limit its growth rather than put it out.

Choppers doused flames on the western and southern edges of the Granite Gulch Fire, which was sparked by lightning on July 14 near the center of the 365,000-acre Eagle Cap Wilderness, Oregon's largest.

Under a policy that's been in effect for more than 25 years for the Eagle Cap, Forest Service officials decided to manage, rather than fight, the fire, which has burned an estimated 1,000 acres.

Nathan Goodrich, fire management officer for the Wallowa Fire Zone, said the fire has had beneficial effects, including burning fuel on the ground and creating a mosaic pattern of burned and unburned forest that replicates what fires have historically done in the Wallowa Mountains.

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Body of missing Baker City man found

EO Media Group staff

A relative on Monday evening found the body of a Baker City man missing in the Elkhorn Mountains since July 26.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash confirmed that the relative found the body of Derrick Austin Coates, 32, in the Marble Creek area about 9 miles west of Baker City.

That's where a huckleberry picker found Coates' Jeep Cherokee early on the morning of July 27.

No other information was available this morning from the sheriff's office.

Numbers keep improving at the Fair

By **Dick Mason**
The Observer

The resurgence of the Union County Fair is continuing.

Attendance at last week's four-day fair was higher than a year ago, when it was about 14,000. This marked the third straight year fair attendance has been up.

"We were up each day (from a year ago) by a lot," said Margaret Spence, manager of the Union County Fair.

Final figures are not yet

available, but Spence said that attendance was highest on Friday. She credits Friday's strong turnout to the evening concert of Portland rhythm and blues musician Curtis Salgado.

"He was a big draw," Spence said.

On Saturday, everyone age 17 and younger got in free, which boosted attendance. The free entry was made possible by sponsors, and Spence hopes it will be possible to do this again in 2020.

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Dick Mason/The Observer

Lowell Beeman drives an old fire truck from the City of Island City in Friday's Union County Fair Parade on Adams Avenue.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
60 LOW
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Thursday
89/58
A t-storm around

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541-963-3161
Issue 93
3 sections, 28 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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