



Sports

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Good day to our valued subscriber Faye Winkle of La Grande

2020 Legislature

Short session, hot topics

Legislators prepping to tackle guns, wildfires, homelessness

By Sam Stites, Jake Thomas and Claire Withycombe
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Legislators will roll up their sleeves for some speedy politicking in February, tackling some of Oregon's thorniest problems.

When they gather for the month-long legislative session, legislators want to improve the state's care for people with mental illness and its ability to fight increasingly destructive wildfires.

They want to protect the state's air quality by decreasing the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Also high on the "to do" list is moving thousands of Oregon's homeless people off the street and into housing.

Lawmakers expect to cooperate across party lines in the Democrat-controlled Legislature to progress on run-of-the-mill issues and budget fixes.

But the greenhouse gas proposal poses the risk of a political blowout. Last year, Senate Republicans fled the state to avoid taking a vote on a similar proposal. They have said such an act remains an option for them in February.

Other controversial issues coming back to life include campaign finance reform and firearm regulation.

Here's a guide to what to watch once legislators convene in the Capitol on Feb. 3:

Homelessness

The issue: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates about 15,800 Oregonians are homeless. About 64% are "unsheltered," meaning they live in public or private places not meant for human habitation, such as cars or public parks. House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, wants lawmakers

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Australian Wildfires

On the front lines



Alex Tigani/Singleton Argus

Firefighters from the Australian Army Reserve at the Hunter Valley RFS are briefed about the status of fires. Nathan Goodrich, fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Wallowa Fire Zone, returned to Northeast Oregon last week after spending the past month or so in Australia.

Nathan Goodrich returns from helping battle to douse Australian wildfires

By Katy Nesbitt
For the EO Media Group

JOSEPH — Facing a historic fire season, American fire managers are mobilizing for Australia to help quell hundreds of fires that have blazed across the country since August.

Nathan Goodrich, fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman North Zone, was one of 20 Americans who teamed with 20 Canadians dispatched to the state of New South Wales in December. Goodrich returned home Jan. 12, but several U.S. Forest Service personnel from Northeast Oregon will remain in Australia until the end of February.

Goodrich said he served as an operations section chief. Most of the



Goodrich

positions filled by North Americans were similar positions, as much of Australia's fire work force is volunteer.

Heat waves and drought have fueled bigger and more frequent fires in parts of Australia, so far this season torching some 40,000 square miles, an area about as big as Ohio.

"We were sprinkled into teams already there in New South Wales, so we were anywhere from two to three hours north of Sydney to two to three hours south," he said.

Goodrich said he spent the first two weeks working in an office, helping coordinate resources while trying to learn the Australian fire management system.

"Their incident command is

similar, but different — especially their workforce," he said.

The entire state of New South Wales has less than 1,000 full-time fire employees, but 70,000 volunteers. Goodrich likened it to an old-fashioned bucket brigade style of fighting fire, but much more sophisticated. Each small town or rural neighborhood has its own brigade, similar to a volunteer fire department, supervised by the state's rural fire service.

"They do initial attack and extended attack," he said.

When a wildfire is reported, volunteer firefighters get a page. Goodrich said whoever is available jumps on a truck and goes to put out the fire. If the fire grows into a large fire, the rural fire service pages the volunteers

See **Goodrich** / Page 5A

Union County Commissioners

Barry throws hat in the ring

Imbler fire chief challenging Donna Beverage for Position 3

By Dick Mason
The Observer

IMBLER — Mike Barry, a geologist and chief of the Imbler Rural Fire Department, has filed to run for Position 3 on the Union County Board of Commissioners.



Barry

Barry will challenge incumbent Donna Beverage, who is beginning her fourth year as a member of the county board.

"I am running for office to continue my life of public service and to make a difference for Union County," said Barry, who is an emergency medical technician and the local agency liaison for the Oregon Department of Transportation, which he has worked for since 1990 in Union County. He has been a volunteer firefighter in Union County since then as well, for the La Grande Rural Fire Department from 1990 to 2006, and the last 14 years with the Imbler Rural Fire Department and its fire chief since 2012.

Barry, as the transportation department's local liaison officer, is responsible for making sure state and federal funding for transportation projects reaches cities

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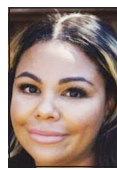
Workshop

White ally discussion coming to La Grande

Program on race, privilege, inclusivity on Feb. 5 has workshop for businesses and a conversation for the public

By Sabrina Thompson
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District has been working to provide resources and education regarding equality and inclusion. As part of this mission, the district invited



James

James will be in La Grande to lead a workshop

for businesses and nonprofits Feb. 5 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and moderate a community conversation at 6 p.m. Both events will take place at Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St. The workshop costs \$25 to attend and includes lunch. The community event, an Oregon Humanities Conversation Project entitled "White Allyship in Close-Knit Communities," is free and open to the public.

"I identify as multicultural," See **Workshop** / Page 5A

La Grande Business

Now under new ownership

Bud Jackson's has new owner

By Dick Mason
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Bud Jackson's, a La Grande restaurant now under new ownership, is undergoing subtle and not-so-subtle changes.

The biggest may have a big impact on how some residents start their mornings. Now known as Bud Jackson's Eatery and Taps, the business started serving breakfast Monday, offering a menu featuring chicken-fried steak and eggs Benedict.

"We needed another restaurant that serves breakfast after the truck stop closed," said Ron Bruce, the new owner of Bud Jackson's, referring to the closure of the Flying J



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Ron Bruce, right, the new owner of Bud Jackson's Eatery and Taps, La Grande, helps cook John Pendarvis with meat cutting in the restaurant's kitchen Tuesday morning.

Travel Plaza's restaurant in the fall.

The closure, he said, left just four La Grande area restaurants serving breakfast.

Bruce said he feels

fortunate to be taking the reins of a restaurant that has a loyal clientele and to have inherited a staff that is second to none.

"The staff we have is See **Owners** / Page 5A

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



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