

HOLIDAY

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McKinney said. Still, the system in place does prevent a lot of heart-ache. McKinney said more than a decade ago, students would carry Valentine’s Day gifts around all school day. The principal said lunchtime was awkward because some students had a wealth of balloons and flowers while others had nothing.

McKinney prefers it when Valentine’s Day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, when there is no school. It prevents students from being hurt, he said, and it means there is one less school day in which there is a disrupted learning environment.

Distress from Valentine’s Day extends well beyond school grounds.

“Valentine’s Day is notorious for being acutely lonely, a spotlight on the relationships we wish we had, or a day where our shortcomings are glaringly obvious as we botch it yet again,” according to Luke Matteucci, founder of La Grande’s Life Reformation Counseling. “The holiday intended to celebrate love can often trigger and exacerbate depression and anxiety.”

Daisy Thompson, counseling supervisor at the Center for Human Development, La Grande, concurred with Matteucci, saying for some people the holiday can hold negative memories and emotions. Fortunately, there is a fix to the issue.

“We teach people they can assign a different, more positive memory to the day,” Thompson said.

She said to remember to take care of yourself if the day is making you anxious or getting you down. Practicing self-care is a great way to help yourself, she said, and if the holiday, or any day, is still too much, CHD has a 24/7 crisis line to help at 541-962-8800 option 6.

Being in a relationship

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— Luke Matteucci, founder of La Grande’s Life Reformation Counseling

does not necessarily keep you from Valentine’s Day blues. A healthy relationship can help, though, according to Thompson.

“There are two key elements to a healthy relationship,” she said. “Communication and boundaries, and communication is by far one of the most important elements.”

Thompson said another way to help bring positive meaning to the holiday is to celebrate even if you don’t necessarily have a significant other. She said during her travels to Bosnia she discovered the day was instead called Friendship Day and celebrated all relationships, not just romantic ones. Even though we don’t celebrate Valentine’s Day that way, she said, it can help alleviate the pressure to spend the day with a romantic partner.

The strain the holiday can put on someone’s wallet can create an additional stressors. The National Retail Federation reported an estimated \$27.4 billion will be spent in the U.S. on Valentine’s Day, an average of \$196.31 per person.

Behind all the stress, however, the holiday is about love, and mental health experts suggest the best way to spend the day is by remembering to love yourself.



Photo by Sierra Dawn McClain/Capitol Press

Thousands of Timber Unity supporters and members gather in front of the state Capitol to protest the cap-and-trade bill under consideration in the Oregon Legislature. The bill would increase the price of fuel and damage the rural economy, they say.

BILL

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of trucks circled the Capitol throughout the afternoon, their horns blaring in apparent protest of the cap-and-trade proposals.

Thursday’s events highlighted the extent to which the climate change legislation has dominated attention in the Capitol, less than two weeks into a legislative session that must end by March 9.

The issue has inspired remonstrations on the floor of the House and frequent threats by Republicans in both chambers to walk away from the session to block the bill, as GOP senators did last year. As the bill makes its way toward a possible Senate floor vote, the realities underlying those threats will be put to the test.

In broad strokes, SB 1530 would set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation, utility and manufacturing sectors, and lower allowed emissions over time. Under the bill, nearly 100 entities would be required to obtain permits for each ton of emissions.

Slightly less than half of those credits would be sold at auction when the bill is fully underway, according to the governor’s office. The remaining credits would be provided free via various mechanisms.

Exactly how much money the bill might raise via auctions remains unclear. The Legislative Revenue Office was still working on a detailed revenue impact statement as the bill moved forward Thursday, but the number is likely to be well below the \$1.3 billion

last year’s carbon bill, HB 2020, was expected to bring into state coffers upon taking effect.

At the same time, the bill is expected to create roughly \$21 million in new costs during the current budget year — money that would likely need to come from the general fund.

Champions of cap and trade say it is the best way to meaningfully address climate change at a crucial time. While Oregon’s greenhouse gas emissions are negligible on the global scale, they believe the state can beat a path for other small or mid-sized states contemplating a climate change policy.

After spending Friday touring areas in Eastern Oregon impacted by last week’s record flooding, Gov. Kate Brown said the state’s latest natural disaster is another example of why action like cap and trade is essential sooner rather than later.

“I think if this event taught us anything it’s that our climate is rapidly changing and we need to take action,” she said. “This is a market-based approach and we’ve worked hard to make sure the approach allows us to invest in our under served communities, particularly our rural communities and tribal communities.”

Democrats also say the system will allow Oregon to achieve strict benchmarks for reducing its greenhouse gases. When the bill takes effect, the governor’s office expects it will regulate roughly 55 million tons of emissions (about 84% of the state’s total emissions).

Under the cap created by the bill, those regulated emissions would be required to decrease to 26 million tons

by 2035, and 9 million tons by 2050.

Critics of the bill argue that this regulatory structure will wreak havoc on the economy by raising prices on fossil fuel use, prompting businesses to close or move out of state.

Before passing the bill along Thursday, the Senate committee amended the bill in some notable respects — including provisions meant to address critics.

Those changes were not enough to placate Republicans, who had complained loudly this week that Democrats are jamming the policy through.

Key to Republican concerns Thursday was the release on Wednesday of new amendments to the bill. The changes were relatively few, but were tucked into a 177-page draft that left most parts of the proposal untouched.

“Democrats dropped a 177-page amendment on cap-and-trade less than 24 hours before a vote in committee,” the Senate Republican Caucus tweeted Thursday. “Conspiracy.”

State Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, vice chair of the Natural Resources Committee, walked out of a floor session of the Senate on Thursday morning, announcing he needed to read through the amendment.

“I have but a few short hours to read this, digest it, so I can be a pertinent member of committee,” Olsen said. “So I would ask to be excused from this floor session so I can go do my work.”

In fact, some of the changes were inspired by — though not identical to — provisions Republicans had requested, including a policy to encourage governments to purchase electric vehicle fleets.

ELGIN

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an Individual award for her role as Genie. Olivia Sturm of Union and Maia Vandervlugt of La Grande earned spots on the festival’s all-star group for their performances as well. Hale said winning these accolades showcase the dedication and hard work the students put in.

Getting to California was perhaps the second hardest task for the performers, right behind competing, according to Hale.

Each student paid for the trip through personal fundraising. The opera house helped offset the costs through small fundraisers or donating proceeds from some shows, but it was up to the youth to cover the majority of the cost.

The festival also had opportunities for students to participate in workshops led by industry professionals, and a small team of students participated in the festival’s Tech Olympics, which tests the technical elements of theater, such as lighting, sound, costume changes and rigging. Hale said the team did not make it to the final



Photo contributed by Elgin Opera House

The Elgin Opera House Youth Actors competed last weekend in the iTheatrics Junior Theater Festival West in Sacramento, California, and took home five awards, including the top award of Outstanding Performance for their production of “Aladdin Jr.”

rounds, but for the group’s first year competing in that part of the festival, they had a lot of fun.

This was the opera house’s third year as part of the Junior Theater Festival West. Going to this festival and competing, Hale said, is a wonderful opportunity for

the students to meet people who share their interest and passion in theater.

“Theater is a creative outlet for these kids,” Hale said. “They may not go on to pursue it professionally, but at least while they are in the program they have a safe place to explore and learn.”

DEAL

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The faculty have yet to vote on whether to ratify the proposal. If the organization approves, the EOU Board of Trustees must give its OK before the contract will take effect.

The negotiations centered on several issues, including salary and working conditions. Neither side released details about the tentative agreement.

As The Observer reported in December, Eastern’s faculty sought base wage increases of 5% for 2019-20 and 4% in 2020-21 and again in 2021-22. The university was offering wage increases of 3.9% for 2019-20, 1% in 2020-21 and 1% in 2021-22. Eastern’s faculty also wanted the year one increase to

be retroactive to July 1. The administration proposed the year one increase be retroactive to Sept. 15.

Eastern faculty wanted their next contract to reduce the gulf between their salaries and those of professors at Western Oregon University, Monmouth, and Southern Oregon University, Ashland, because those are the state universities most comparable to Eastern.

Under the existing contract, faculty at Eastern top out at \$63,703 a year for assistant professors, \$75,152 for associate professors and \$82,854 for full professors.

Terms of the tentative agreement must be made public for 15 days before the faculty union can vote on ratification of the contract. The union has not announced when it will post the terms on its website.

COMING SOON

THE NEXT STOP ON OUR ADVENTURE IS ISLAND CITY

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