

DAILY  
PLANNER

## TODAY

Today is Saturday, April 25, the 116th day of 2020. There are 250 days left in the year.

## TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On April 25, 1945, during World War II, U.S. and Soviet forces linked up on the Elbe River, a meeting that dramatized the collapse of Nazi Germany's defenses. Delegates from some 50 countries gathered in San Francisco to organize the United Nations.

## ON THIS DATE

In 1507, a world map produced by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller contained the first recorded use of the term "America," in honor of Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci.

In 1859, ground was broken for the Suez Canal.

In 1874, radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi was born in Bologna, Italy.

In 1898, the United States Congress declared war on Spain; the 10-week conflict resulted in an American victory.

In 1915, during World War I, Allied soldiers invaded the Gallipoli Peninsula in an unsuccessful attempt to take the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

In 1917, legendary jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald was born in Newport News, Virginia.

In 1959, the St. Lawrence Seaway opened to shipping.

In 1983, 10-year-old Samantha Smith of Manchester, Maine, received a reply from Soviet leader Yuri V. Andropov to a letter she'd written expressing her concerns about nuclear war; Andropov gave assurances that the Soviet Union did not want war, and invited Samantha to visit his country, a trip she made in July.

In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope was deployed in orbit from the space shuttle Discovery. (It was later discovered that the telescope's primary mirror was flawed, requiring the installation of corrective components to achieve optimal focus.)

In 1995, show business legend Ginger Rogers died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 83.

## LOTTERY

**Megabucks:** \$3.5 million

4-22-27-29-38-47

**Mega Millions:** \$174 million

13-15-24-67-70-17 x2

**Powerball:** \$37 million

1-33-35-40-69—PB-24 x5

**Win for Life:** April 22

1-9-20-40

**Pick 4:** April 23

• 1 p.m.: 7-7-5-8

• 4 p.m.: 8-3-0-4

• 7 p.m.: 4-5-9-9

• 10 p.m.: 7-5-1-0

**Pick 4:** April 22

• 1 p.m.: 5-2-1-8

• 4 p.m.: 1-4-8-6

• 7 p.m.: 4-8-2-5

• 10 p.m.: 7-8-6-4

## DELIVERY ISSUES?

If you have any problems receiving your Observer, call the office at 541-963-3161.

## TODAY'S QUOTE

"I think it is all a matter of love: the more you love a memory, the stronger and stranger it is."

— Vladimir Nabokov, Russian-born author (1899-1977)

## Union County Jail reduces inmate population

■ In response to COVID-19 pandemic, jail releases inmates

By Sabrina Thompson

The Observer

La GRANDE — The Union County Jail is working to keep the inmate population low as a response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The jail released two inmates who were at or near completion of their sentence and let another four out who were low-level offenders in pretrial status on March 19.

Concerns about overwhelming the health care system if an outbreak were to occur and about the cost of medical care for inmates were the primary factors in bringing the jail's population down to 16 inmates, Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen said.

The jail can hold up to 37

inmates overseen by the Union and Willamette County criminal justice systems. Having reduced numbers allows for more separation between inmates.

Union County is in line with other counties, according to Rasmussen, with the jail at 43% of capacity. Baker (31%), Malheur (32%), Grant (26%) and Curry (31%) county jails are all below 50% usage of facilities. Umatilla (68%) and Lincoln (52%) counties are at the highest usage. This is according to a report provided by jail manager Nick Hilter.

When inmates enter into custody, they are no longer covered by Medicare or Medicaid or Veterans Affairs benefits and the cost falls onto the county. Rasmussen said if an outbreak were to occur, the jail would not be able to cover the expenses, which would include overtime and the medical costs of treating inmates who had COVID-19. He said another reason for the

change is to avoid overwhelming the hospital with inmate patients.

The jail is following recommendations from the Oregon State Sheriff's Association and is in cooperation and agreement with the Union County District Attorney's Office and state courts as to which inmates go free.

District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel said the jail has maintained excellent communication with her office regarding the reduction. She cited several reasons efforts have been made to keep down the jail population, including restrictions on police patrols, cutting back on court proceedings and statewide changes to inmate transports.

"While the jail population fluctuates regularly, this is the lowest it has been in years," McDaniel said.

Rasmussen said the most important factor is the jail continues to house high-risk inmates to keep residents safe.



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

The number of inmates at the Union County Jail, shown above, has been reduced to 16 in an attempt to keep the jail population low during the coronavirus pandemic.

## Legislative Emergency Board tables rural hospital proposal

By Dick Hughes

For EO Media Group

SALEM — Oregon legislators balked Thursday at loaning \$50 million in federal money to rural hospitals reeling from the coronavirus pandemic.

Members of the Legislative Emergency Board tabled the proposal so it could be reworked to include forgivable loans or straight-out grants. Several legislators said hospitals would be unable to take out loans, even at zero percent interest for the first year as Gov. Kate Brown has proposed, and the allowable uses were too restrictive.

"This was federal money given to us to pass on to our rural hospitals. Why are we making it a loan program as the state?" asked Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena. "It's wrong. It's morally incorrect in my opinion. This money should be grants from the beginning. In that way, we could actually help our rural hospitals."

Thirty-three rural hospitals would be eligible. But Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, said the plan envisioned by Brown's staff was the equivalent of throwing only a 6-foot rope to someone drowning 10 feet offshore.

"We would look so incredibly foolish if we allowed hospitals to go broke on our watch during a global pandemic," Johnson said. "But there is all kind of stuff wrong with what the governor's folks have written."

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, noted that some hospitals are getting federal assistance,

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Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena

with Congress approving additional funding this week. "I think we want to be cautious about how we don't just unilaterally say everybody needs, frankly free money," she said, "because there are a lot of businesses and a lot of places around the state that need that money, too."

After a recess, Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, called for tabling the proposal, saying Brown's staff agreed with that move. No date was set for when the Emergency Board would take up the issue again.

The board did approve coronavirus-related funding for rent assistance, small businesses, domestic violence resources, COVID-19 testing for workers in long-term care facilities, and aid to jobless workers, such as undocumented immigrants, who are ineligible for unemployment insurance.

Many of the details have yet to be worked out. Legislative Fiscal Officer Ken Rocco told the Emergency Board, which for the first time was meeting by video conference, that it remained unclear how much federal aid Oregon was getting and what restrictions accompanied the money.

Hospital officials from across the state had told

legislators earlier in the week that hospitals cumulatively were losing \$13 million a day due to the costs of COVID-19 equipment, a state ban on non-urgent surgeries, fewer people receiving care in emergency rooms and other factors.

More than 30,000 Oregon workers in the health care and social assistance fields have applied for unemployment since March 15.

Oregon Health & Science University announced Thursday that it was substantially reducing salaries and making other cutbacks to deal with a projected revenue loss during the next 28 months of \$1 billion to \$1.4 billion. "It is not just the rural hospitals that are struggling," Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, who is a physician at OHSU, told her Emergency Board colleagues.

"Every single health system in the state is struggling as a result of this."

Brown announced Thursday that as of May 1, she was lifting the ban on elective medical and dental procedures. Steiner Hayward said that would help, but hospitals would take time to ramp up and have lost significant income in the meantime.

The board approved the 11 items on its agenda, all on a bipartisan basis and most of them unanimously. Much of the discussion centered on fiscal accountability for how relief money is spent and ensuring that rural areas benefit.

Legislators approved a new program under which businesses employing 25 or fewer workers could be eligible for state grants or loans if they have not

received federal aid.

Rep. David Gombert, D-Otis, said he had been concerned that coronavirus assistance had not been going to the smallest of small businesses, which are the economic backbone of his district.

"People are hurting everywhere," he said. "According to the state economist, they're hurting particularly hard in my part of Oregon."

The state will contract with community development financial institutions to run the program, but Gombert noted those institutions primarily are along the Interstate 5 corridor.

"I worry that it's not going to support everyone equally," he said, "that perhaps we're focused on helping the most people rather than people who are hurt the most."

**VOTE  
LAURIE  
DRAPER**  
OTEC  
Board of Directors  
Position 3  
Harney County



Raised in Grant County and a Harney County Resident for 37+ years, my entire working career has been in customer service (US Bank, small business owner, and ODFW). I hope to continue that service for the member-owners of Oregon Trail Electric. Now retired, I have the time and energy to work with the OTEC Board and offer a fresh perspective to continue to provide reasonable, reliable power for you.

**I ask for your vote.**

## BUDGET

Continued from Page 1A

The budget committee will first meet on June 3, at which time its members will receive the school district's proposed 2020-21 budget.

The committee will have the option of approving the budget at that meeting or meeting again on June 10 and June 17 to look more closely at the proposed spending plan.

The budget committee is responsible for approving a proposed budget, which then will be submitted to the school board.

The school board will vote on adoption of the budget June 24.

In other matters, the school board received a presentation from Carol Samuels, managing director for Piper Sandler Companies, a multi-national independent bank

and financial services company. Samuels spoke to the board about the potential refinancing of payments the school district must make for general obligation bonds. Money from the bonds funded about \$30 million in capital construction and building maintenance in the school district between 2015 and 2018.

Refinancing the debt payments could reduce the property tax payments property owners in the school district must pay for the bond. Merle Comfort, chair of the La Grande School Board, said the school district will be monitoring market conditions to see if a refinancing package will be feasible to pursue in the future. Comfort said the school district will be ready to respond quickly if the economic conditions improve to the point that the school district will be in a position to potentially save taxpayers money.



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