



# The humble spud

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# THE OBSERVER



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Good day to our valued subscriber Robert Journot of Wallowa

## Bill aims to keep outbreak data public

### Testimony in favor of SB 719 targets Oregon Health Authority's handling of information

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
The Observer

SALEM — A proposal for a bill to compel the state to keep aggregate data relating to reportable disease investigations as public information remains alive in the ongoing 2021 Oregon Legislature.

Senate Bill 719 had a public hearing last week and has a work

session on Wednesday, March 31. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Health Care. According to the text of the proposal, "Aggregate data derived from information obtained by the authority or a local public health administrator in the course of an investigation of a reportable disease or disease outbreak are not confidential or exempt from dis-

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For details on Senate Bill 719, see Page 5A.

closure" under specific sections of Oregon's public records law "unless the data could reasonably lead to the identification of an individual."

Sen. Bill Hansell does not serve on that committee but explained most bills that did not have a hearing or work session by March 19 were dead in the Senate. A bill can't exit a committee to

head to a floor vote without a work session. Oregon's constitutional limit of 160 days for the Legislature, he said, firms up scheduling to consider new laws. But at this point in the session, he said, plenty of proposals are done.

SB 719, though, is pitting public interest in data about the coronavirus against health agencies concerned with revealing an individual's private health information.

Two Portland Democrats, Sen. Michael Dembrow and Rep.

Karin A. Power, are the chief sponsors of the bill. Hansell said they were liberal progressives who tend not to want to infringe on people's privacy, and in looking at 719, he said, there seem to be "lot of caveats" to ensure that's the case.

Prior to the public hearing on Wednesday, March 24, the committee received testimony against and for the bill.

Collette Young, adminis-  
*See, Bill/Page 5A*

### Wallowa Lake

## Funding for dam on the burner

### Legislature looks to restore \$14 million in funding for Wallowa Lake Dam project

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — Although sales for bonds to fund the \$16 million refurbishment of the Wallowa Lake Dam were supposed to begin this month, the Oregon Legislature put that on hold for a year because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp drop in Oregon Lottery revenue.

But lawmakers and dam stakeholders are optimistic the funding will come through this year.

"What they have decided to do is include those in discussion for this year's funding cycle. Because they were in the governor's, that gives us some options," state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said Thursday, March 25.

He said although the lottery funding is "trending in the right direction," it may not be necessary to rely on the bonds and the money could come out of general fund or another fund.

"We won't need to go to lottery bonds in that case," he said.

The plan was to raise \$14 million through sale of bonds from lottery revenue and begin selling them this month, with work on the dam to begin after irrigation season ends Sept. 30. Another \$2 million of the \$16 million project will be raised from "other sources," said Dan Butterfield, president of the Wallowa Lake

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## REGRETTING RADIO SILENCE

### KEOL alumni reflect on value of college radio



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Eastern Oregon University reflects through the windows of the KEOL radio station room Friday, March 5, 2021. Several alumni have contacted EOU about how to keep the radio station alive following the announcement that it would be defunded at the end of the 2020-21 school year.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Eastern Oregon University's KEOL radio studio sits empty on Friday, March 5, 2021. The university's board votes in May on the proposal to not fund the station next school year.

#### THE KEOL SITUATION

- The Eastern Oregon University Student Fee Committee voted on Feb. 5 to discontinue funding KEOL, the student-run FM radio station, for 2021-22.
- The station sought \$33,606 for 2021-22.
- The committee cited various reasons for its decision, including budget shortfall from declining enrollment and the notion that traditional broadcast radio is a fading industry.
- Supporters of KEOL argue the station has a future and might be able to continue as a community radio station.
- The EOU's Board of Trustees at its May 20 meeting votes on approving the budget for student incidental fees.

**DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Joe Garner of Ontario admitted the news hit him hard.

Garner was jolted recently when he found out KEOL FM, Eastern Oregon University's student-run radio station since 1973, likely will be shut down in June at the end of the 2020-21 school year.

"I was heartbroken. I don't like it," said Garner, who served as KEOL's station manager and program director during portions of the time he worked at the radio station from 1985-89.

The shutdown appears imminent after EOU's Student Fees Committee voted to defund KEOL, which is receiving \$33,481 from student incidental fees this school year to operate.

The committee, composed of EOU students, voted Feb. 5 to take the step primarily due to a budget shortfall from declining enrollment. Other reasons the committee cited were low student participation and the belief that traditional broadcast radio is a fading industry in today's digital age.

Garner disagreed, saying, "There is still room for radio."

He said radio is going in a different direction today but it has a future, one he believes KEOL should be helping train students for.

"Radio needs good people, and Eastern can provide them," Garner said.

He said \$33,481 is a small price to pay for Eastern to give students a chance to be introduced to radio.

"When you go to college you want to be exposed to as many things as possible, to get a well-rounded education," Garner said. "It is important to get out of your comfort zone."

Lack of student participation was another factor in the Student Fee Committee's decision to defund the station, which EOU's student senate supported on March 5. The station has about four student disc jockeys, plus two paid student staff members. This is a far cry from the 1980s and 1990s when KEOL had enough disc jockeys to fill almost every three-hour time slot almost around the clock.

"We had about 100 DJs and they were on the air day and night," said Jack Kemp of Corvallis, a station manager at KEOL

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#### WEATHER

 Full forecast on the back of B section

	<b>Tonight</b> 28 Low Clear and cold		<b>Wednesday</b> 62/43 Warmer
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