

# New lawsuit challenges Oregon legislative redistricting

By **PETER WONG**  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A lawsuit by a former Republican state representative from Clackamas and a lawyer from Lake Oswego have asked the Oregon Supreme Court to overturn the legislative redistricting plan passed by the Legislature’s Democratic majorities.

Patrick Sheehan, a real estate agent who was in the Oregon House for one term a decade ago, and Samantha Hazel are represented by Kevin Mannix, a Salem lawyer, former legislator and two-time candidate for both attorney general and governor and 2008 District congressional seat. Mannix was a Democrat when first elected to the House in 1988, but he became a Republican in 1997, after he lost his first bid for attorney general in the 1996 Democratic primary.

In their suit filed by the deadline of Monday, Oct. 25, they asked the high court to substitute the “Equitable Map Oregon Plan.” They allege that the plan approved in Senate Bill 882 on Sept. 27 violated the legal standards for legislative redistricting, that there were no in-person



Abigail Dollins/The Associated Press, File  
**Lawmakers meet in the Oregon House of Representatives on June 23, 2021, at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem. A lawsuit by a former Republican state representative from Clackamas and a lawyer from Lake Oswego have asked the Oregon Supreme Court to overturn the legislative redistricting plan passed by the Legislature’s Democratic majorities.**

public hearings and that the hearings that were held focused only on plans submitted by the Democratic and Republican caucuses. “Failure to consider nonpartisan maps, or even allow testimony on those maps, even when their submission was allowed, violated” Oregon law, the suit alleges. “This showed that the legislative districts were drawn not based on public input, but instead in regard to the preferences of Oregon’s two major political parties. The redistricting process was limited to maps that use political party preferences as a basis. This

public hearings and that the hearings that were held focused only on plans submitted by the Democratic and Republican caucuses. “Failure to consider nonpartisan maps, or even allow testimony on those maps, even when their submission was allowed, violated” Oregon law, the suit alleges. “This showed that the legislative districts were drawn not based on public input, but instead in regard to the preferences of Oregon’s two major political parties. The redistricting process was limited to maps that use political party preferences as a basis. This

**What’s next**  
Lawyers for the Legislature and the Oregon Department of Justice have until Nov. 8 to respond to the court about why the approved plan complies with legal and constitutional requirements. The justices have until Nov. 22 to decide the lawsuit.

If the court decides no changes are required, the plan takes effect Jan. 1 for the 2022 election cycle. If the court decides there should be changes, an opinion specifying them will be issued by Dec. 6, and Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, the state’s chief elections officer, would submit proposed changes by Jan. 17. The court would then face a final deadline of Jan. 31; the amended plan would become final on Feb. 1, slightly more than a month before the March 8 filing deadline for the 2022 primary election.

A separate challenge, led by former Secretary of State Bev Clarno, has been filed against the congressional redistricting plan that lawmakers also approved on Sept. 27. Though the Supreme Court is also the ultimate arbiter of that plan, the initial review will



Clarno



Fagan

be conducted by a panel of five retired judges named by Chief Justice Martha Walters. Among the legal standards for redistricting are that districts must be contiguous, be of equal population, use existing geographic and political boundaries, not divide communities of common interest and be connected by transportation links. Districts also cannot be drawn to favor a political party, incumbent legislator or other person and cannot dilute the voting strength of any language or minority group. Two House districts must be nestled within the boundaries of a single Senate district. Oregon has 30 Senate and 60 House districts. The Senate and House redistricting committees had planned a series of in-person public hearings around Oregon when they released draft maps on Sept. 3, following the Aug. 12 release of 2020 federal census-block data used to draw maps to account for population shifts in the past decade. But the onset of the delta variant of the COVID-19 coronavirus compelled the committees to revert to a series of virtual hearings — two for each of Oregon’s five existing U.S. House districts — between Sept. 8 and 13. Committees conducted all hearings and votes online during the 2021 regular session that ended June 26.

# Interpretive Center takes up temporary residence in Baker City

By **LISA BRITTON**  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — The wagons are packed and moving west into Baker City this winter as the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center takes up a temporary home at the Baker Heritage Museum.

The change is due to a multi-year closure of the Interpretive Center for renovations to make the building, which opened in 1992 on Flagstaff Hill about 5 miles east of town, more energy efficient.

The move to Baker City will maintain a presence in town while the center is closed, said Larisa Bogardus, public affairs officer for the BLM’s Vale District, which manages the center.

“We wanted to be someplace visitors can find us,” she said. Work on the Interpretive Center is expected to begin March 1, 2022. Bogardus said the construction contract was awarded to Hess Contracting Inc., from Preston, Idaho, for \$6.51 million. The center, which has been



Bureau of Land Management/Contributed Photo  
**The Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove St. in Baker City, will serve as the temporary home of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center while the center, 5 miles east of town, undergoes a major renovation.**

closed since November 2020 due to the pandemic, will get new siding, roofing, insulation, windows, doors and HVAC system. Currently, Bogardus said, the center’s monthly electricity bill is about \$10,000 — one of the highest for any of the agency’s facilities.

**A home at the museum**  
The BLM and Baker County have signed a lease for about 4,500 square feet at the Heritage Museum, including the Leo Adler Room and about one-third of the ballroom upstairs. The museum, formerly the city’s natatorium,

is at 2480 Grove St., just east of Geiser-Pollman Park. Bogardus said the lease is for \$44,000 per year paid in monthly installments for up to four years. It will increase at 2.5% annually for inflation. “This partnership allows NHOTIC to continue to reach the public with stories and hands-on experiences of the historic Oregon Trail during the closure of the Interpretive Center,” said Alexandra Botello, acting manager of the Interpretive Center. Bruce Nichols, a Baker County commissioner, sees the agreement as positive. “I’m very grateful that the partnership was formed,” he said. “For years to come it will keep the Interpretive Center out in front of the public.” He also hopes that having a NHOTIC presence in town will entice visitors who might otherwise get off the freeway to only visit the center. “We’re going to get them downtown more so than before,” Nichols said. “I think it will be good for economic development

— it’s going to help everybody.” Installation of the Oregon Trail exhibit will begin Jan. 3, 2022, with the goal of a grand opening in the spring of 2022. “We are in the design process now,” Bogardus said. “Visitors will receive an overview of the Oregon Trail and its place in history, and also learn more about the pioneer experience through hands-on activities for all ages.” Although the projected renovation time is three years, Bogardus said the lease is for four years just in case the project takes longer. “There are a lot of things that are beyond our control,” she said. “And it has to be finished before we move back in.” Although the center will be closed, the trail system will remain open and can be accessed off Highway 86. A few sections of trail that run near the center might be closed at times during construction, Bogardus said. Looking ahead, she said the center will again offer living history performances and concerts in Geiser-Pollman Park, similar to the offerings this past summer.

THE OBSERVER

Committed to excellence for our readers



## First Place

- Feature Story - “Team digs into local mystery” by Phil Wright
- Use of Graphics - “Looking back: Coronavirus in 2020”

## Second Place

- Feature Story Personality - “One step at a time” by Dick Mason
- Feature Story - “New neighborhood watch helping people cope with crisis” by Dick Mason
- Business or Economic Story - “Flaunting the freeze” by Kaleb Lay
- Editorial - Phil Wright
- Sports Story - “Standout siblings” by Ronald Bond
- Page One Design - Martha Allen

## Third Place

- General Excellence
- Enterprise Reporting - “Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen under investigation” by Sabrina Thompson and Phil Wright
- Special Section - “2020: The Year in Review”



**2020 Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association Better Newspaper Contest Awards**



The Astorian  
East Oregonian  
Bend Bulletin  
Capital Press  
La Grande Observer  
Baker City Herald  
Wallowa County Chieftain  
Blue Mountain Eagle  
Hermiston Herald  
Seaside Signal  
Redmond Spokesman  
Chinook Observer  
Coast River Business Journal