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Local school districts post strong grad rates

5 local public high schools see at least 90% of seniors graduate

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Graduation rates in public high schools in Union and Wallowa counties look strong overall, according to 2020-21 statistics released by the Oregon Department of Education.



The statistics, put out on Thursday, Jan. 20, indicate that five of the nine public high schools in the two counties posted graduation rates of at least 90% and that rates were up at four of the high schools. Imbler High School is at the

head of the class with a graduation rate of 100%. Imbler's rate was up 14.29% from 2019-20 when 85.71% of seniors graduated. Imbler also had a perfect graduation rate in 2018-19.

"Students, staff, parents and the community are what makes this happen," said Doug Hislop, the Imbler School District's superintendent.

Hislop added that the role parents play in boosting students cannot be underestimated. "Parents and teachers are

co-educators," he said.

The Enterprise School District had the second highest graduation rate in Union and Wallowa counties at 95.65%, up from 2019-20 when it had a graduation rate of 85.37%. Joseph and Wallowa high schools, Wallowa County's other two public high schools, also were in the 90% range. Joseph's rate was 91.67%, down 1.19% from 2019-20, and Wallowa's was 90%, up from 83.33% in 2019-20.

Union had the third highest graduation rate in the area at

94.12%. Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells credits the high mark to his staff's ability to identify students that need extra attention.

"We are very fortunate to have a strong staff who early on can identify students who are at risk," he said, adding that Union High School's small size makes it easier for staff to get to know their students and help them be able to make their commencement walks.

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Paralegals to the rescue?

Oregon State Bar proposes program to let paralegals help in family law, housing cases

By **ALEX WITTWER**
EO Media Group

SALEM — The Oregon State Bar is seeking public input on a new proposal that would introduce a new career path for paralegals — and allow paralegals to take on more responsibilities when it comes to family and tenant/landlord law.

That public comment period will run until Feb. 18.

The bar put forth the proposal for a new program to allow paralegals to provide certain limited services to individuals — not

businesses — with matters related to family law and landlord/tenant disputes, including assisting on paperwork and guidance on court procedures.

According to the bar, 75% to 85% of these cases in Oregon see litigants navigating the legal system alone, even in areas such as housing, parenting time or child custody.

"To the extent that we have a two-tiered system in these areas — some with access to a lawyer and others without — this could provide some trained help for those who may otherwise be entirely on their own," according to Kateri Walsh, spokesperson for the Oregon State Bar.

Family law courthouse facilitators already offer many of the procedures, such as help with filing and requesting correct



Walsh

See, **Paralegals/Page A6**

LEGISLATURE

Setting priorities

3 Eastern Oregon legislators share what they are backing in the 2022 short session

By **ERICK PETERSON**
and **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

SALEM — Eastern Oregon lawmakers looking at the upcoming legislative session are focusing their efforts on more money for ranchers who lose livestock to wolves, increasing consumer protection and taking on illegal marijuana farms in Southern Oregon.

Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, told the EO Media Group about their priorities for the 2022 short session that begins Feb. 1 and must end by March 10.

Wolf bill drawing Levy's attention

Levy named two bills as most important to her, starting with House Bill 4127, a million-dollar ask for the Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund.

"Right now, we have already close to \$800,000 worth of cattle losses and missing livestock, not to mention all the incremental costs that go along when wolves have been chasing animals," she said, adding animals have suffered "continued weight loss, low birth rates and more because of wolves."

She also is big on HB 4154, a \$400,000 request to provide



Levy



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. The Oregon Legislature's "short session" begins Feb. 1, 2022, and must end by March 10.

the La Grande Airport with new fuel tanks.

Levy said she will be co-sponsoring bills as well, including HB 4022 to put course curriculum on school websites, and HB 4042, which would require doctors who prescribe drugs for chemical abortions to provide "certain information" to their patients. She said she also is adding her name to bills concerning animal predator control, a salmon habitat credit program and gun-free zone liability.

Smith focusing on consumer protection

Smith in a press release Thursday, Jan. 20, said consumer protection, gun rights and housing are among top issues he will work on during the session.



Smith

He said he is proposing a bill to limit how much Oregonians have to pay residential general contractors before completing remodel or

repair projects.

"For context, large contractors charge 100% of residential project costs up-front," Smith stated. "Once payment is received, the consumer is at their mercy and completion of the project can often become an incredibly difficult process. This legislation would strengthen the consumer's interests and improve project outcomes."

Smith also explained he was "disheartened by the passage of

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Family counting their blessings following fall

Wallowa County man recovering after fall results in broken back

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — An Enterprise man is recovering in Seattle after falling into a creek by his home and breaking several vertebrae.

MORE INFORMATION

Several funds have been set up to help Morgan with medical bills. A member of the family said Community Bank locations are taking donations for the Sam Morgan Memorial Fund. There is also a GoFundMe page set up at <https://gofund.me/93d4e53c>.

Sam Morgan's family members, however, are counting their blessings, grateful that Morgan, 75,

not only is still alive after a frightening ordeal that left him in Trout Creek for an estimated 90 minutes or more, but that he doesn't appear to have any paralysis or adverse effects from hypothermia.

"That's our first blessing — No. 1, he is alive," his sister, Susan Wagner, told the Chieftain Friday, Jan. 21. "No. 2, he is not paralyzed. He can move all extremities."

Wagner said her brother

is not dealing with skin turning black and hasn't lost fingers or toes from the time in the icy water.

"He doesn't seem to be experiencing any of that," she said.

Morgan, who just celebrated his 75th birthday, Wagner said, was "doing stuff outside" at his home around 10:30 a.m. Wednesday morning, Jan. 12.

"He has a little bridge that crosses Trout Creek,"

she said.

While crossing the bridge, he slipped.

"(He) fell across the bridge and broke several vertebrae in his back, and fell into Trout Creek," she said.

The fall was between 10 and 15 feet. Morgan was unable to pull himself from the water, Wagner said. Eventually, he was able to position himself on

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THURSDAY LOCAL ANIMAL SHELTER LOOKS AT NUMBERS

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