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Murder scene burned

(Photo by *IVFD Media Dept*)

Battalion Chief Kamron Ismaili puts water on a camper fire Dec. 22. The same camper was the the site where Devin Remington was found with a gun shot wound to the back of the head in the early hours of Dec. 20. At press time no arrests have been made in Remington's murder.

Measure 101 explained

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Robb Cowie, Oregon Health Authority communications director

Anita R. Savio
IVN Contributing Writer

A special referendum in January may determine whether 12,000 low income adults and potentially 1,800 low income children in Josephine County will lose their health insurance. The number statewide is respectively 350,000 adults and 80,000 children.

Voters' pamphlets should have already gone out in the mail, and voters will shortly be receiving their ballots. Only one issue will be on the ballot: Measure 101.

A YES vote on Measure 101 will approve a 0.7 percent assessment on some hospitals for a year and nine months and a 1.5 percent assessment on some health insurance plans for a two-year period.

Health insurance companies would not be allowed to raise premiums more than 1.5 percent to compensate for the tax.

The purpose of the assessments is to continue funding for potentially two health coverage programs that were expanded under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), often referred to as Obamacare: The two programs are expanded Medicaid, called Oregon Health Plan (OHP) in Oregon, for adults with up to 138 percent of poverty income, and expanded Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for children and pregnant women with up to 300 percent of poverty income.

A NO vote will force the Oregon legislature to go back to the drawing board in a quest to find other sources of funds to continue these two programs. The programs could experience cuts of some sort or be discontinued.

During the 2017 legislative session, the Oregon Legislature approved the two temporary assessments. But three Republican legislators, Rep. Julie Parrish, Rep. Cedric Hayden and Rep. Sal Esquivel, launched a successful petition drive to repeal the new health care tax. The question now goes to Oregon voters in the form of Measure 101.

The history of Measure 101 starts in 2014 when the state of Oregon, along with a number of other states, decided to accept federal funding to fully fund the expansion of these two programs from 2014 through 2016. But both programs have come into doubt, although for different reasons.

A continuation of expanded OHP now requires the state come up with a partial match to federal funding. In Fiscal Year 2017-18 that match is 6 percent to federal funding of 94 percent.

Put another way: For every 60 cents the state of Oregon is able to provide, we will receive $9.40 from the federal government.

The required state match will gradually increase to 10 cents for every nine dollars in subsequent years.

Expanded CHIP, on the other hand, is in danger because a Congress that has been focused with other issues -- ACA replace and repeal passage of the tax reform bill -- has not yet gotten around to renewing funding for that program.

Robb Cowie, Oregon Health Authority communications director explained: "I don't think we ever expected to be in this place with CHIP, where Congress hasn't acted and federal funding for the program has lapsed. The problem is that month after month has gone by and we don't have a clear re-authorization of the program. "

According to Patty Wentz, spokesperson for the "Yes on Healthcare" campaign, "Without Measure 101, health benefits for everyone on Medicaid are at risk. People could lose coverage altogether or benefits could be cut, such as prescription drug coverage, mental health, dental care or other services. These are services that have been cut in the past when there were budget shortfalls. It just depends on how the legislature decides to make the cut."

Wentz added that over 160 organizations support Measure 101.

However other sources, including the editorial boards of Portland's *Oregonian* newspaper and Grants Pass's *Daily Courier*, have criticized the assessment on insurance plans as unfair: Only plans covering small businesses, K-12 school districts, nonprofits and college health insurance plans will face this additional charge.

SEE 101 ON A-10

Dane Alveraz is going Down Under.

Read about it on A-3

Grocery Outlet has picked its seat, now it's up to the city

Jason McMillen
IVN Contributing Writer

On Jan. 8 the Cave Junction City Council met for a land use hearing regarding whether or not the city will allow the owners of the Junction Inn to split their property, thereby allowing a Grocery Outlet to be located in what is now the vacant dirt lot between the inn and Shop Smart. The primary opponent of such a decision rests with the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) who maintains that the property is better left whole so that the land and their expensive grant funded feasibility study, whose findings say that only a sprawling single story hotel erected at an unspecified time in the future will result in a good return on investment, remains viable and attractive. The hearing ended for further discussion and will be resumed Jan. 18 at 7 p.m. in City Hall.

However, a representative from Main and Main LLC, the developer interested in building the store, said that Grocery Outlet has made up their mind and will not accept any other location in Cave Junction. He further added that the location has been found in their evaluation to be a perfect spot for a retail store because of the location's activity. "This would be the location that is prime. Financially we were able to make it work with the owner of the property, we were able to make it work from a code perspective and working with the tenant. That's a huge commitment by Grocery Outlet to come to Cave Junction. For it to be right for them—this is the only location… This is you deciding as a council whether you would like to have Grocery Outlet in Cave Junction or not."

Additionally, the representative said that Main and Main LLC knows of a hotel that's interested in building on the Junction Inn's location. "There's an absolute interest by a hotel in the property. A deal will have to be struck with the current property owner for that to be feasible but, after talking to the property owner, she certainly is open to that… I can't disclose who it is but it's absolutely not going to be a one story hotel."

Kenny Houck, IVCDO's community development manager, said that if he could turn back time he wouldn't have vouched for Shop Smart to be built in their location either, preferring they go on the north side of town alongside where he believes Grocery Outlet should be located. "Aesthetically and in terms of long term development… we believe that this kind of large retail stuff should go toward the north end," Houck said, "If you're trying to make more appeal to travelers—having us look like we're a suburban strip mall for three blocks doesn't really do much to give Cave Junction any kind of character or identity."

Despite thinking that the location is not ideal, Houck believes that Grocery Outlet is a good addition to the community.

Study shows investment in parks will lead to job growth for region

Jason McMillen
IVN Contributing Writer

A study commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts and prepared by Cadmus Group has determined that investments made by the federal government into the national park system could create or support 1,026 jobs in Oregon and 110,169 jobs nationwide. Based on 2016 data, the National Park Service reports that the total amount of deferred maintenance, essentially maintenance that's been put on hold, is now up to $11.3 billion. This backlogged workload, which will require a considerable amount of manpower to complete, includes but is not limited to, crumbling roads, deteriorating buildings, impassable trails and outdated utility systems.

In total, there's over $105 million worth of deferred maintenance in Oregon's six national parks. $85.3 million of that total is work needed at Crater Lake National Park. The Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve is ranked second most deteriorated in the state with deferred maintenance projects estimated to require up to $15.5 million.

Although road infrastructure dollars is what's needed most at the national level, in total requiring an estimated $4 billion, the Oregon Caves are primarily in need of funds to invest into repairing old structures or simply erecting new ones. According to the study, 94 percent of the Oregon Cave's total deferred maintenance by asset category is needed for buildings.

Throughout 2016, over 80,000 people visited the Oregon Caves, bringing in an estimated $5.8 million into local gateway regions. Of the $5.8 million, the hotel industry was the biggest benefactor, absorbing about 35 percent of the total. Restaurants came in second, seeing about 20 percent. Tourist expenditure also supported 94 jobs which provided $2.5 million in labor income.

SEE JOBS ON A-10