

Judge denies eco-saboteur's information request

BY MAXINE BERNSTEIN
The Oregonian

As eco-saboteur Joseph Dibee awaits sentencing, his lawyer Wednesday urged a judge to order the government to produce any videos of his arrest in Havana, Cuba, any communications between the U.S. and Cuban governments about Dibee or any money paid to Cuba that helped with the handover of the fugitive.

Dibee, 54, was set to be sentenced next week based on a negotiated plea agreement reached in April, but the sentencing has been postponed until Nov. 1 due to the latest dispute over sharing of evidence.

Dibee, a fugitive for 12 years who was finally tracked down in Cuba in August 2018, pleaded guilty to two counts of conspiracy to commit arson and one count of arson in a string of attacks that destroyed or damaged environmental targets in Oregon and California more than two decades ago. They include a fire he helped set at the Cavel West Inc. meatpacking plant in Redmond on July 1, 1997.

After an hourlong hearing by phone, U.S. District Judge



An official with the Oregon State Police Fire Marshal's Office investigates the remains of the Cavel West horse meatpacking plant in Redmond in July 1997. The plant never reopened.

Ann Aiken denied most of the requests by Dibee and his lawyers, relying on the prosecution's responses that either the sought-after evidence didn't exist, was already turned over to the lawyer or wasn't relevant to sentencing.

"I generally sentence people

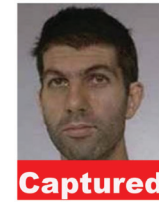
similarly situated. If I were you, I'd spend more time on those arguments than some of these issues that are far afield," Aiken told Dibee's lawyer, Matthew Schindler.

The judge said she recognized from the start that the primitive compilation of the im-

mense amount of evidence and how prosecutors shared it with defense lawyers without indexing or a way to electronically search the material would mean the case "was going to take an enormous amount of time and cost a fortune." The U.S. Attorney's Office didn't have a tally of

JOSEPH MAHMOUD DIBEE

Conspiracy to Commit Arson of United States Government Property and of Property Used in Interstate Commerce; Conspiracy to Commit Arson and Destruction of an Energy Facility; Arson of a Building



FBI/file

Joseph Dibee, in an FBI photo released after he was arrested in 2018.

the full cost Wednesday.

Federal investigators said Dibee was part of the largest group of eco-saboteurs ever taken down by the FBI. They called themselves "The Family" — more than a dozen people who committed crimes in the name of the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front — and caused an estimated \$40 million in damage from 1996 to 2005.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Quinn Harrington has said the government will recommend a sentence of seven years and three months in prison for Dibee. Schindler is expected to argue for time served.

Dibee pleaded guilty to engaging in a conspiracy to set fire

to government buildings and destroy other property, driven by "ideology," and as part of "direct actions," from October 1996 through December 2005, according to Harrington.

Along with the fire at the Redmond meatpacking plant, Dibee pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit arson in a fire at the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's wild horse corrals near Litchfield, California, on Oct. 15, 2001.

The buildings at Cavel West were destroyed, with the loss estimated to exceed the insured value of \$1.2 million, according to court records. The fire was designed to end the processing of meat from wild horses slaughtered by the plant.

Data shows drop in student skills during COVID

Declines recorded in Redmond and statewide

BY BRYCE DOLE
CO Media Group

Reading, writing, math and science skills among students declined in virtually every Central Oregon school district during the pandemic.

That's according to new state test data released by the Oregon Department of Education on Thursday, providing the first comprehensive glimpse at the pandemic's impact on schooling since the spring of 2019.

In all, 81% of students in the six regional districts took the state standardized test, called the Smarter Balanced Assessments. About 46% of students passed the state's English language arts test, 31% passed math and 26% passed science, according to state data.

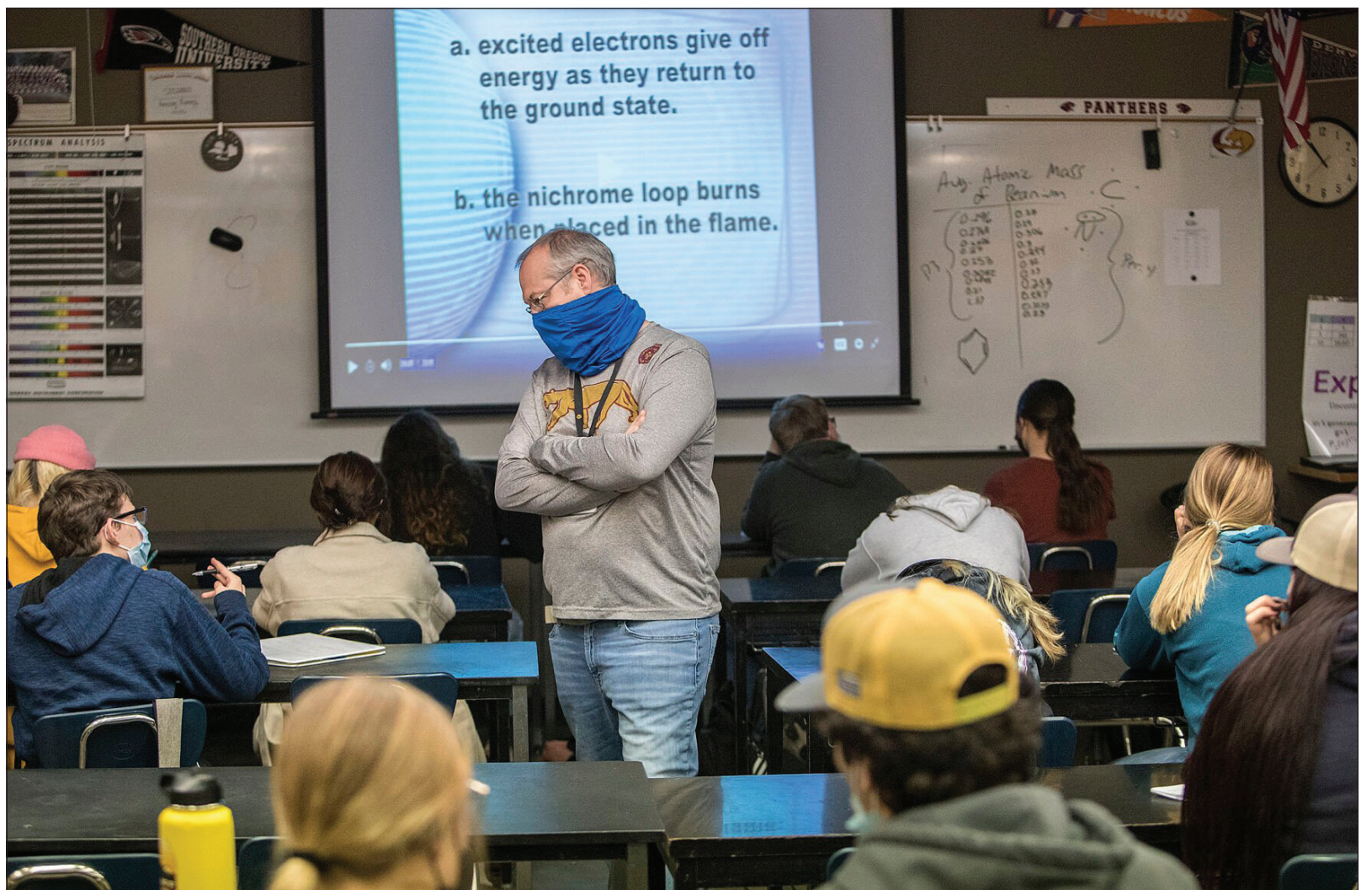
That's a nearly 7% drop in English language arts and math scores and an 8% drop in science on average since before COVID struck.

"The pandemic had a negative impact on academic learning," Colt Gill, the state's education boss, said in an interview with The Bulletin. He added: "What those results really tell us is that we need to double down on what we know that works to address unfinished learning at this time."

The new data highlights a widely held concern among educators that shuttered schools and prolonged online learning during the pandemic stunted student academic performance. And it has heightened concerns among some educators that the loss of education could impact students for years.

Some districts reported improvements at individual grade levels in individual subjects. Several regional school district superintendents said in interviews this week that they were happy to see this progress despite the hardships their students have faced. Others noted they don't consider the state tests to reflect the full breadth of student abilities.

In addition, district officials argue that some of the data is skewed due to the increasing number of



Ryan Brennecke/Bulletin file photo

Chris Boegelsack walks around the classroom and supervises as students take a chemistry quiz at Redmond High School in January 2022.

high schoolers who are choosing not to take the state tests, which education officials use to measure the performance of districts and schools and take action to improve the education system.

State officials said earlier this week that, because less than 60% of high school students took the reading and math tests, that data was essentially useless. A state advisory committee recommends that at least 80% of students should be taking the test for the data to be useful in making decisions around budgeting, policy, professional development and more.

But what data is available suggests broad drops in student skills facing practically every district.

In the Redmond School District, students scored 45% in reading and writing, 33% in math and 30%

"The pandemic had a negative impact on academic learning. ...What those results really tell us is that we need to double down on what we know that works to address unfinished learning at this time."

— Colt Gill, director of the Oregon Department of Education

in science. That's 7% lower in English language arts, 9% lower in math and 4% lower in science.

However, just over 62% of students took these tests on average, with the largest opt out rates among high school students. Superintendent Charan Cline said this makes it difficult to tell how well students are performing.

Redmond School District uses the results to evaluate student progress and determine whether current curriculum and instruc-

tion is effective. The district also looks at the data of different student groups to see if there is a gap in performance, said Linda Seeborg, RSD assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, in a release.

Chris Morton, RSD director of elementary programs said that disruptions to learning during the pandemic, such as the shift to online learning and the discontinuity of attendance due to quarantining and illness, are a likely contributor

to the lower scores.

Despite reporting the second highest state test participation rate among Central Oregon's school districts — 89% — Jefferson County School District reported the region's lowest reading and writing and math scores. The district was in this same position back in 2019, and it posted the region's lowest science scores, too.

In Sisters, 55% of students passed reading and writing, and 34% passed both math and science. In Crook County, 48% of students passed reading and writing, 32% passed math and 29% passed science. In Culver, 44% of students passed reading and writing, 23% passed math and 13% passed science.

■ Reporter: 541-617-7854, bdole@bendbulletin.com



THE SPOKESMAN WELCOMES YOUR SUBMISSIONS

Letters policy: We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 300 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of the Spokesman.

Guest columns: Your submissions should be between 600 and 800 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere.

How to submit:

- Email is preferred: news@redmondspokesman.com
- Or mail to: 361 SW Sixth Street, Redmond OR 97756

Photos: If you have interesting photos you would like to share, email them to news@redmondspokesman.com.

Milestones: Email news@redmondspokesman.com to request an engagement, wedding, anniversary or birthday announcement form. Forms should be submitted within one month of the celebration. For more information, call 541-383-0304.

Obituaries: Local obituaries are paid advertisements submitted by families or funeral homes. For death notices, specific guidelines must be followed. When submitting, please include your name, address and contact number.

• Call 541-385-5809 for deadlines or other information (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.)

• Email: classified@redmondspokesman.com