

Ilwaco graduate served on board Air Force One

Luethe was chief flight engineer

EO Media Group

CHINOOK, Wash. — The end of Barack Obama's presidency will have special significance for Aaron Luethe of Chinook, a member of Ilwaco High School's Class of 1987.

From 2010 until last year when he retired from the U.S. Air Force, Luethe served as chief flight engineer on Air Force One, the official Boeing VC-25 aircraft used to transport the president worldwide. Before becoming chief, Luethe served three years on the flight deck of Air Force One as a member of the Presidential Air-lift Group at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland during the final year of President George W. Bush's two terms in office and the start of the Obama administration.

Although his work on the presidential planes was known by some in south Pacific County during the Obama years, security considerations dictated avoiding publicity about Luethe's unusual occupation.

As chief flight engineer, Luethe reported "directly to the presidential pilot on all operational matters concerning mission planning, aircraft performance, worldwide suitability, and maintenance status of Air Force One," according to his LinkedIn profile.

Luethe retired in May, 28 years after joining the service



Submitted Photo
Chinook's Aaron Luethe, a member of Ilwaco High School's Class of 1987, recently retired from the U.S. Air Force after nearly a decade of service.

right out of Ilwaco High School in 1987. His rank at retirement was chief master sergeant, the highest enlisted rank in the Air Force. He is the son of Betty and the late David Luethe of Chinook and nephew of former Long Beach mayor and city councilman Gary Luethe.

He racked up more than 7,700 flight hours and his military decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and Air Force Achievement Medal.

Now working as an operational analyst for Boeing in the Seattle area, Luethe earned a master's degree in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2013.

Astoria-based Coast Guardsman dies while training in Virginia

The Daily Astorian

An Astoria-based U.S. Coast Guardsman has died while training in Yorktown, Virginia.

Lt. j.g. Devin J. Hepner, 34, of Logan, Utah, was found unresponsive in his barracks Monday morning at Training Center Yorktown, according to the Coast Guard. He

was transported by local emergency medical services to the nearby Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital, where he later died.

Hepner was serving in Astoria with Sector Columbia River's Marine Safety Unit Portland, which investigates spills, accidents and other suspicious activity. He was in Virginia

for investigating officer training.

"We are deeply saddened by this tragic loss," Capt. Jay Vann, commanding officer of Training Center Yorktown, said in a statement. "We only got to know Devin a short time, but his passing will be felt by many. We thank him for his dedicated service; our thoughts are with his family

during this difficult time."

"The loss of Devin comes as a great shock to us," said Capt. Tom Griffiths, commanding officer of Marine Safety Unit Portland. "He was a seasoned Coast Guard officer who leaves behind a legacy of service protecting lives on our waterways. He will be missed as we keep his family in our prayers."

Snow damages Oregon wildlife center

Associated Press

GRANTS PASS — Four animal enclosures at a wildlife center in southwestern Oregon have been damaged by days of snow and rain.

The Daily Courier reported that one of the bird enclosures at Wildlife Images collapsed completely during the wet weather last week. The net ceiling on two other aviaries was also damaged,

as was the roof of a metal skunk cage.

Dave Siddon, executive director of the rehabilitation and education center west of Grants Pass, says the destroyed aviary was built with help from

an AmeriCorps team and will need to be rebuilt before spring, when rehabilitation season begins. He says the enclosure provided an area where birds could fly before being released into the wild.

Cops, county reporter joins The Daily Astorian

The Daily Astorian

After a roughly three-month search, The Daily Astorian has found a new public safety, county, courts and parks reporter.

Jack Heffernan, a 23-year-old University of Oregon graduate, joined the newsroom last week. He stepped into the position previously occupied by Kyle Spurr, who moved to the Bend Bulletin in the fall.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Heffer-

nan started out wanting to be a sports reporter. At UO he studied journalism and political science.

A turning point came after his sophomore year of college when he studied abroad in Austria — an excursion that included an internship writing news stories in Vienna for an English-language website.

The experience, he said, instilled in him a deeper curi-



Jack Heffernan

osity about how society functions. "You assume a lot of things about living inside the U.S. that just completely change when you study abroad or spend some time abroad," he said.

Another internship followed, this time at The Register-Guard in Eugene.

At The Emerald — UO's student newspaper — Heffernan worked as the sports edi-

tor, then as managing editor.

He said he enjoys writing and the opportunity to dive into a story or topic. "The combination of both is really what kind of drives me."

Laura Sellers, the newspaper's managing editor, said: "Jack Heffernan is eager to tackle his new beats after covering myriad experiences in different journalism markets, here and abroad.

"He shows promise and an eagerness to learn the craft."

Oregon bill would protect birth control, cover abortions

Democrats worry about possible Obamacare repeal

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

Oregon is joining several other states that are seeking to protect no-cost birth control in case the federal mandate is rolled back as part of a potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

Most legislation in other states has focused on preserving mandatory insurance coverage of hormonal contraceptives without a patient copay, with some other moderate expansions on the federal act. Oregon's legislation, however, reaches far beyond the federal law to include abortions, vasectomies and other services.

Oregon's legislation — the Reproductive Health Equity Act — was in the works well before Republican billionaire Donald Trump won the November presidential election.

However, Trump's vow to repeal and replace President Barack Obama's landmark health care law, popularly dubbed Obamacare, could intensify pressure to pass the bill. Republicans in Congress have made the repeal a first order of business this year.

The bill is intended to reinforce and fill in gaps in reproductive health care coverage under Obamacare and to expand those who are eligible for the benefits, said Laurel Swerdlow, advocacy director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon.

"We remain deeply concerned with what is happening on the national level," Swerdlow said in a phone interview Wednesday. "This legislation is in no way to be a remedy for political attacks on the Affordable Care Act. This is legislation to establish coverage for

reproductive health care for all Oregonians."

For instance, abortion and vasectomies, services excluded from the Affordable Care Act mandate, would be covered under Oregon's legislation. Men, transgender individuals and undocumented immigrants would be eligible for the coverage.

"All Oregonians need access to full reproductive health coverage for families to thrive, for a healthier state and for a stronger economy," Swerdlow said. "Working families are under so much strain today, and oftentimes, they have a hard time making ends meet.

"What this legislation does is it recognizes that a right without access is not a right at all," she add, referring to the right to terminate pregnancies. "What we really want is to make sure that all persons have access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care that they need. We don't always know a person's circumstances. We aren't in their shoes."

Advocacy groups

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon was one of several advocacy groups that worked on the legislation, sponsored by state Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham, and Rep. Phil Barker, D-Aloha. Others were the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon,

Asian-Pacific American Network of Oregon, Family Forward Oregon, NARAL Pro Choice Oregon, Oregon Latino Health Coalition and Western States Center, Swerdlow said.

Too controversial

Sen. Monnes Anderson introduced similar legislation in 2015, though it did not include coverage for men, transgender individuals and undocumented immigrants. Bipartisan opposition in the Senate, however, kept her bill from progressing to a vote, she said.

Some senators felt covering abortions could be too controversial, Monnes Anderson said.

Gayle Atteberry, executive director of Oregon Right to Life, said the anti-abortion organization would oppose the new legislation.

"While Oregon Right to Life takes no position on true contraceptives, we, of course, are opposed to abortion, which always takes the life of an innocent unborn child," Atteberry said in an email. "Because of the abortion component, ORTL is opposed to (the bill)."

Atteberry's comment raises the question of whether including abortion could sink the bill and doom other benefits such as coverage of birth control without a copayment.

"I believe that this year there will be much more pressure to pass this important bill," said

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland. "I believe that events at the national level will add to that pressure."

Support coverage

The bill's proponents, including Rep. Barker, said they believe a majority of Oregonians will support coverage of abortion. The Legislature also has a Democratic majority.

"This is a bill sponsored by two Democrats, and Demo-

crats are in charge" noted Rep. Sherrie Stenger, R-Scio, who sponsored an unsuccessful bill last year to ban sex-selective abortions. "That is probably the most salient point in this conversation."

Lawmakers will consider the proposal during their session, which kicks off Feb. 1.

Since 2014, California, Illinois, Maryland and Vermont have passed laws adopting the Affordable Care Act's mandate

to cover contraceptives without a patient copayment and expanded on the federal law's provisions. Democratic lawmakers in Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota and New York have proposed similar measures this year, according to a report earlier this month by Reuters.

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