



BMCC LOSES IN FINAL SECONDS
WOMEN'S BBALL/1B



Pendleton student brings airsoft guns onto school bus 3A

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

Most local schools beat state graduation rates

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
and **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Oregon's graduation rate increased slightly in 2014, but that may just be on paper.

The rates released by the Oregon Department of Education this week reflect a new "cohort" graduation rate that counts modified diplomas and students who met the requirements for a diploma after four years but chose to stay a fifth to take community college classes on the state's dime.

The resulting bump in graduation rates, then, from 69 percent in 2013 to 72 percent in 2014 can be at least partially attributed to the change.

Oregon ranked 49th in the country in 2013, more than 10 percent below the national graduation rate of 80 percent.

In Morrow County and most of Umatilla County, however, rates are more in line with the national average.

Morrow County

Morrow County School District was well higher than the state average with an 83 percent graduation rate for the class of 2014, up from a 71 percent on-time graduation rate in 2013. Within the district, Irrigon High School was at 79 percent and 83 percent of Riverside Jr./Sr. High School students earned a diploma in four years.

Heppner Jr./Sr. High School had the district's highest graduation rate at 96 percent after only one of its 27 seniors did not graduate on time.

Heppner head teacher Greg Grant said parent-teacher collaboration is key to getting students successfully through graduation. The district has revamped

2014 Graduation rates

Athena-Weston:	88%
Echo:	95%
Helix:	100%
Hermiston:	68%*
Ione:	88%
Milton-Freewater:	77%*
Morrow County:	83%
Pendleton:	72%*
Pilot Rock:	96%
Stanfield:	79%
Ukiah:	100%
Umatilla:	67%

*Includes alternative school students



EO file photo

Weyekin Bill, Autum Barnes and Elexas Bearchum watch the final graduates accept their diplomas during Pendleton's 2014 graduation ceremony at the Pendleton Convention Center.

its parent-teacher conferences to facilitate more meeting time between teams of teachers and individual parents.

See **GRADUATION/6A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Sen. Bill Hansell speaks about an attack ad levied against him by the Capitol Watch PAC during a meeting of the Milton-Freewater Tea Party Patriots.

Tea Party hosts senator

Hansell checks pulse of far right constituency after attack ad

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

An attack ad this month accused Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, of not caring about the opinions of his District 29 constituents.

The ad, which appeared in the *East Oregonian* and *La Grande*

Observer, came from a former Oregon Representative Jeff Kropf, of Sublimity, who founded the ultra-conservative Capitol Watch PAC. The group attempted to skewer Hansell for supporting undocumented immigrants getting driver's cards, Cover Oregon, the Columbia River Crossing project

and a bill to release certain criminal offenders early.

On Wednesday night, Hansell got a chance to find out if his district's right wingers share Kropf's views at a town hall hosted by the Milton-Freewater Tea Party Patriots.

Larry Nye, who moderated the meeting and coordinates the Tea Party Patriots, said the session was planned long before the ad appeared. Hansell requested the opportunity to both listen to local

opinions and speak about the upcoming legislative session.

The 40-person crowd gathered at the Milton-Freewater American Legion Hall included elected officials, Tea Party members and others.

Hansell told them he was in Myanmar when the ads published, serving as part of a three-man team training government leaders who are moving from military

See **HANSELL/6A**

Wyden warns rural counties being robbed

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

In 2014 Umatilla County lost out on more than \$860,000 because Congress did not reauthorize the federal law that reimburses counties for a lack of timber harvest revenue from national forests.

But on Tuesday, Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat, announced he is leading the charge for Congress to re-up the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act that Congress let lapse, in hopes of restoring those dollars.

"Your counties are being robbed," is the headline of a letter Wyden sent to fellow senators, followed by, "Don't stand on the sidelines and let it happen."

Wyden has been a strong backer of the law and in public forums has called it a promise the federal government made to counties. Oregon counties — like those in other Western states — came to rely on the annual payments. Umatilla County in April 2014 would have received \$933,094 from the program. But with the lapse, it received just \$72,008 under the Twenty-Five Percent Fund Act of 1908, which also helps make up the lack of revenue but at a far lower rate.

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock said the payment program is not too big of a deal here because there is not much national forest within county lines. While more than \$930,000 is serious money, Umatilla County has a total budget of about \$61 million and a general fund around \$25 million.

But throughout Oregon and the West, Murdock said, the payments matter.

Morrow County would have received \$177,667 from the program, and instead received \$26,503 via the 1908 act. Payments to Umatilla and Morrow counties are small potatoes compared to Oregon's timber-thick counties. According to Wyden's information, Lincoln County lost \$8.4 million, Grant County lost \$9.1 million and Lake County missed out on \$11.1 million.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, Oregon would have received almost \$68 million in 2014-15 if the program continued, by far the most of any state. California would have been second with more than \$35.6 million.

Wyden reported Oregon instead received almost \$6.2 million, and counties are faced with "slashing critical budgets such as law enforcement, schools, and road maintenance."

Secure Rural Schools, or SRS, expired in 2006, and Congress extended the act each year at a reduced level until the 2014 session, although the president's 2015 budget supported a five-year plan to ease counties off the payments.

Congress in 2008 approved a four-year, \$3.3 billion extension of the act and Oregon counties received \$740 million of that.

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Boston buried by two feet of snow

BOSTON (AP) — Boston bounced back quickly Wednesday from the Blizzard of 2015, with subways, buses and trains up and running again the morning after the storm buried a swath of New England in 2 to 3 feet of snow.

Many businesses reopened, as did Logan Airport, and homeowners, motorists and storekeepers dug out with grudging praise for the forecasters, who missed the mark in New York but got it right in New England.

Chris Laudani, a Boston bartender, became an instant symbol of the city's resilience for shoveling snow off the yellow and blue Boston Marathon finish line on Boylston Street, where the 2013 terrorist bombing killed three people and wounded more than 260.

"For someone to brave the blizzard to clear our finish line for us is yet an-



AP Photo/The Hartford Courant, Mark Mirko

Joe Baton, left, and Austin Atlas clean a Mansfield sidewalk after a winter storm, Wednesday in Mansfield, Conn. The storm buried the Boston area in more than 2 feet of snow and lashed it with howling winds that exceeded 70 mph.

See **BLIZZARD/6A**

