

# Bill would study effects of closing Montana coal plant

SEATTLE (AP)—Washington lawmakers say they want to study the effects of closing a massive coal-fired power plant in southeastern Montana that provides power to the Northwest.

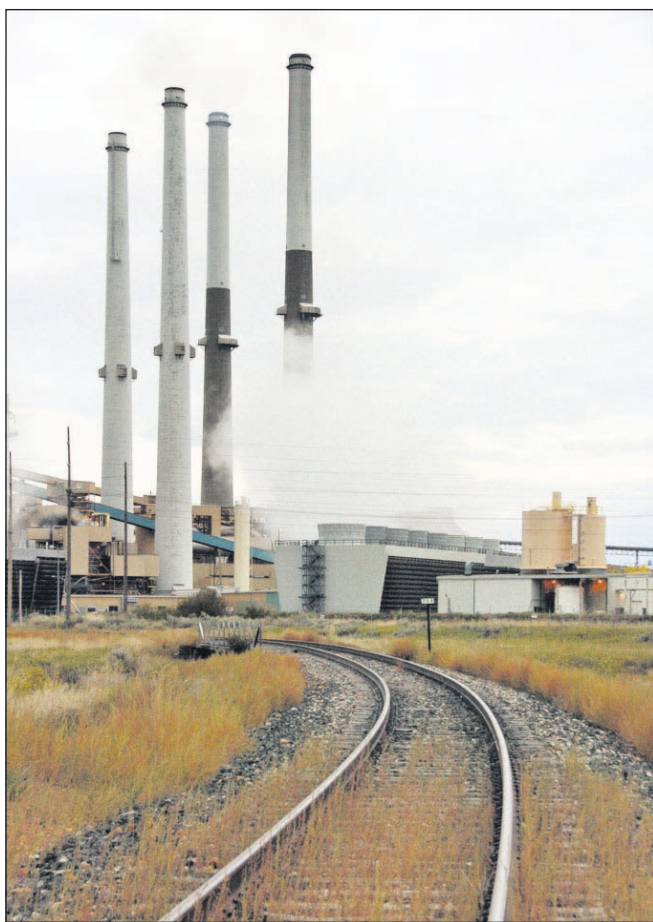
Senate Bill 5874 was initially written to make it easier for owners of the four-unit plant in Colstrip, Montana, to shut that plant down, prompting letters of concern from Montana's governor and Montana's utility commission.

But the Senate amended and passed the bill Wednesday night to call for a study on the costs and benefits of a possible closure. It now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration, where those wanting to wean Washington state off coal hope it can be amended again.

Bill sponsor Sen. Doug Ericksen, R-Ferndale, said Thursday that Senate members felt they didn't have all the information they needed.

"I heard from lots of people in Montana and Washington concerned about rushing into a decision that doesn't need to be made today," said Ericksen, who chairs the Senate Energy, Environment & Telecommunications Committee.

Sen. Kevin Ranker, D-Orcas Island, urged support on the Senate floor, saying it would keep the legislation alive so more work



This 2014 photo shows the Colstrip Steam Electric Station in Colstrip, Mont.

can be done in the House. Ranker has said the state has "a moral imperative" to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and wean itself off coal that is imported into the state.

The Sierra Club said it hoped changes to the bill can be made in the House

that will lead to retiring Colstrip, a large source of carbon pollution, and replacing that coal-power with cleaner, renewable energy.

That's what troubled Sen. Jim Honeyford, R-Sunnyside, one of three senators who opposed the bill. "This leaves this bill open to all

kinds of mischiefs over in the House, the other body, and just because it's a study here doesn't mean it'll come back a study," he said before Wednesday's vote.

The legislation comes as investor-owned utilities operating in Washington have been under pressure by Gov. Jay Inslee and environmental groups to reduce or eliminate electricity they get from out-of-state coal plants.

Washington's only coal power plant in Centralia is slated to close by 2025, and Oregon's only coal plant in Boardman will shut down in 2020. Much of the state's coal-fired electricity comes into the state from the Colstrip plant in Montana and the Jim Bridger plant in Wyoming.

Senate Bill 5874 does not specifically name Colstrip, but it would apply to it.

Last month, Montana Gov. Steve Bullock wrote to Inslee and senators, expressing concerns that the bill would have significant effects on his state.

The Democrat said he agreed that climate change is a serious issue. But "I have grave concerns when one state takes action that could have significant economic consequences for another state, on a matter that will require action on a much larger scale to be successful," he said.

# Man serves 897 days in jail, even though he didn't commit a crime

Associate Press

PORTLAND — A man waiting to testify in an Oregon murder case has been held in jail as a material witness for nearly 900 days, though he has committed no crime.

Legal experts tell *The Oregonian* that it's exceptionally rare to be held as long as Benito Vasquez-Hernandez.

The 59-year-old man has been incarcerated at the Washington County Jail for 897 days, or just shy of two and half years. His bail was set at \$500,000.

Prosecutors say Vasquez-Hernandez's testimony is essential to their case, and he probably wouldn't show up to court if released. His elder son, Eloy Vasquez-Santiago, is suspected of killing Maria Bolanos-Rivera of Hillsboro in 2012.

Civil rights advocates say Vasquez-Hernandez should be released because he is poor, has no formal education and appears to have very low mental competency. He's also an immigrant who doesn't speak English and doesn't understand the American justice system.

Vasquez-Hernandez's other son is the second material witness in the case. He was released last fall after being diagnosed with schizophrenia while serving 727 days in jail.

Both material witnesses were arrested two years

ago in California, after Vasquez-Hernandez told detectives he had seen blood in the minivan his elder son drove, and the younger son said his older brother had admitted to him that he had stabbed the woman to death.

Two days later, the older brother, Eloy Vasquez-Santiago, turned himself in to authorities. He told investigators that he had worked with Maria Bolanos-Rivera at Oregon Berry Packing Company in Hillsboro, and they had gone out on a date the day she disappeared. Eloy Vasquez-Santiago told police he stabbed her because she had insulted him, but did not tell them where the body could be found.

In Oregon, a judge can keep material witnesses in custody indefinitely until they testify, or release them pending trial. But typically, detention lasts less than a week.

Vasquez-Hernandez's defense attorney tried to get him to give a sworn statement in a video deposition. But Vasquez-Hernandez was so flustered, he kept repeating he should not be in jail and he's innocent — until the judge threw him out.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Jeff Lesowski said he sincerely regrets keeping the witness locked up for so long, but he sees no alternative.

Eloy Vasquez-Santiago's murder trial is scheduled to start Tuesday.

# Gov. Brown signs low-carbon fuel standard bill

By HILLARY BORRUD  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill into law Thursday that will allow the state to implement a low-carbon fuel standard.

The governor's announcement followed contentious votes in the House and Senate where lawmakers passed the legislation by near-party-line votes. Republicans and some rural Democrats voted against the bill, and Republicans withdrew in protest from

discussions of a transportation project funding package.

The governor's decision to sign it was not unexpected. Brown had expressed support for the concept in her first press conference as governor last month.

Senate Bill 324 will make permanent the fuel standard established by a 2009 bill. The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission voted in January to adopt regulations based on that existing law that will require fuel importers and producers to reduce the car-

bon content of transportation fuels by 10 percent during the next decade, starting in January 2016. However, the existing law was set to sunset this year before the agency could implement the rules.

Fuel in Oregon already contains 10 percent ethanol for gasoline, and a 5 percent biodiesel blend for diesel because of a separate state mandate. The state could achieve the low-carbon fuel program goals if importers and producers can find ethanol and biodiesels with lower carbon

contents, but to meet the 10 percent carbon reduction goal companies will also likely have to purchase carbon credits through a system the DEQ will establish.

Brown said in a statement Thursday the fuel standard will be an important tool to fight climate change, and Oregon is already experiencing the effects of a warming planet.

— *The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

## Corrections

Pendleton's Historic Preservation Committee must approve any renovations that alter the primary façade of historic properties in town, but not interior remodels. A photo caption with the story "This old house" (March 12) included incorrect information.

Circe Verba studies the geochemistry of engineered rock. The article "PHS grad designs Lego set for aspiring female scientists" (March 7) misstated her current job duties.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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## AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly sunny and mild	Cloudy and mild with a shower	Breezy with rain at times	A couple of morning showers	Mostly sunny and pleasant
<b>PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST</b>				
69° 47°	67° 51°	62° 42°	60° 39°	62° 42°
<b>HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST</b>				
68° 44°	67° 45°	65° 39°	63° 37°	66° 40°

## ALMANAC

### PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

### TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 64°	44°
Normals 54°	34°
Records 78° (1934)	14° (1906)

### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.04"
Month to date	0.04"
Normal month to date	0.46"
Year to date	1.59"
Last year to date	3.34"
Normal year to date	2.97"

### HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

### TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 69°	47°
Normals 57°	33°
Records 77° (2003)	11° (2009)

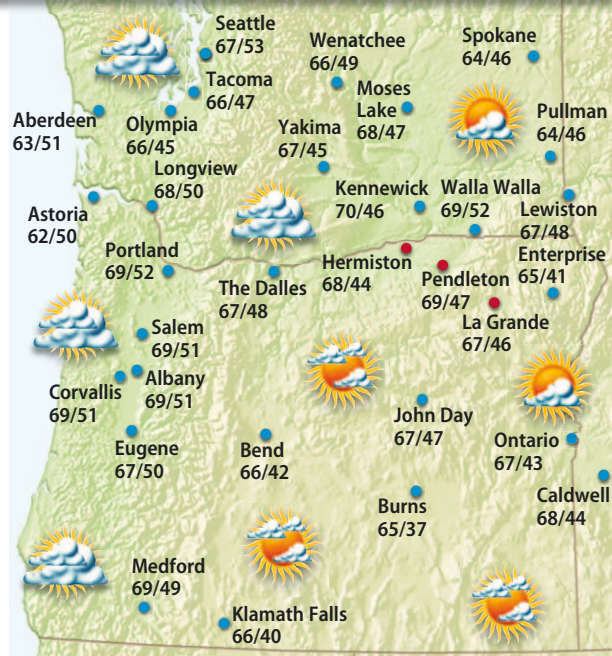
### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.01"
Month to date	0.01"
Normal month to date	0.38"
Year to date	1.07"
Last year to date	2.13"
Normal year to date	2.62"

### SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:12 a.m.
Sunset tonight	6:58 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:01 a.m.
Moonset today	11:44 a.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Mar 13	Mar 20	Mar 26	Apr 4



## REGIONAL FORECAST

**Coastal Oregon:** Mostly cloudy today. Cloudy tonight; periods of rain, except dry in the south. Overcast tonight.

**Eastern and Central Oregon:** Warm today with clouds and sunshine; pleasant in the south. Overcast tonight.

**Western Washington:** Mostly cloudy today. Periods of rain late tonight. Periods of rain tomorrow.

**Eastern Washington:** Partly sunny today. Cloudy tonight. Spotty showers tomorrow.

**Cascades:** Clouds and sun today. Cloudy tonight; occasional rain and drizzle across the north.

**Northern California:** Clouds and sun today. Mostly cloudy tonight. Variable cloudiness tomorrow.

## REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	62	50	c	56	42	r
Baker City	62	41	pc	62	44	c
Bend	66	42	pc	59	42	c
Brookings	58	51	c	57	52	sh
Burns	65	37	pc	65	43	sh
Enterprise	65	41	pc	58	43	sh
Eugene	67	50	c	60	48	r
Heppner	68	47	pc	61	47	c
Hermiston	68	44	pc	67	45	c
John Day	67	47	pc	62	47	c
Klamath Falls	66	40	pc	63	46	c
La Grande	67	46	pc	63	47	c
Meacham	64	41	pc	58	43	c
Medford	69	49	c	68	52	c
Newport	60	50	c	56	46	r
North Bend	62	53	c	60	50	sh
Ontario	67	43	pc	67	46	c
Pasco	69	43	pc	68	45	c
Pendleton	69	47	pc	67	51	c
Portland	69	52	c	60	48	r
Redmond	68	43	pc	63	43	c
Salem	69	51	c	60	46	r
Spokane	64	46	pc	58	44	sh
Ukiah	68	43	pc	60	44	c
Vancouver	69	50	c	60	46	r
Walla Walla	69	52	pc	67	53	c
Yakima	67	45	pc	66	43	sh

## WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	54	30	s	54	35	pc
Hong Kong	72	67	c	75	69	pc
Jerusalem	58	46	s	61	42	s
London	50	36	r	46	39	c
Mexico City	69	48	sh	66	48	r
Moscow	40	26	pc	42	26	pc
Paris	51	36	c	49	37	c
Rome	60	41	s	58	47	pc
Seoul	49	26	c	46	29	pc
Sydney	73	65	pc	77	64	sh
Tokyo	56	40	s	53	41	c

## WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Sat
<b>Boardman</b>	NE 3-6	SW 6-12
<b>Pendleton</b>	ESE 4-8	SSW 7-14

## UV INDEX TODAY

0 2 4 4 2 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

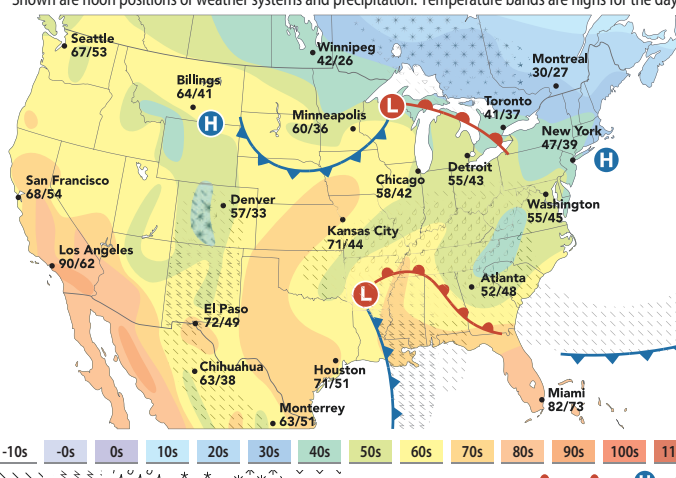
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



**National Summary:** Drenching rain will expand from the South to the Ohio Valley and central Appalachians today. Locally strong storms will affect the Gulf Coast. Spotty storms are forecast for Colorado and New Mexico.

**Yesterday's National Extremes:** (for the 48 contiguous states)

**High 90°** in Fort Myers, Fla. **Low 12°** in Frenchville, Maine

## NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.				Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W		Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	64	40	t	65	39	pc	Louisville	58	55	r	62	41	r
Atlanta	52	48	r	70	55	sh	Memphis	70	61	r	65	54	sh
Atlanta City	43	41	pc	53	43	r	Miami	82	73	pc	84	70	pc
Baltimore	51	41	pc	58	41	r	Millwaukee	62	40	pc	53	33	pc
Billings	64	41	s	71	50	pc	Minneapolis	60	36	pc	58	39	pc
Birmingham	60	57	sh	73	53	c	Nashville	59	57	r	70	47	r
Boise	67	49	pc	68	51	c	New Orleans	73	54	r	73	57	pc
Boston	37	30	s	43	32	r	New York City	47	39	s	54	42	r
Charleston, SC													