

WILDFIRE: Initial offer would have provided only \$19 million in coverage

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D-Ashland, co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee.

"It is unlikely we will receive the same sort of fire insurance coverage we have received in the past from Lloyd's of London," he said. "They will either want lot more money up front for the policy, or they will place it in such a way our deductible is so high that it's not going to make financial sense for us to continue. So that's a significant challenge in the tens of millions of dollars we have to

be aware of for fire seasons going forward as part of the budget."

Sen. Fred Girod, R-Lyons, said Lloyd's initial offer would have provided only \$19 million in coverage to the state after Oregon put up more than twice that amount in deductibles and payouts — a deal he says would not be worth it.

Girod, who is on the budget committee, says negotiations are continuing.

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ANIMALS: Second-degree animal neglect changed to a felony when 11 or more animals are involved

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misdeemeanors.

Still, the Oregon Department of Justice appealed Wallace's sentencing, and the Oregon Court of Appeals sided with the state. And the Oregon Supreme Court on Aug. 25, 2014, affirmed the appellate decision.

The new ruling, though, revealed the state in early September 2014 asked the court to hold off on issuing the appellate judgment and "entertain a motion to determine jurisdiction." That is, to figure out if the state even had the authority to appeal Wallace's sentence because the charges were misdemeanors.

After several pages of legal explanation, the supreme court determined: "In this case, the appellate courts never had appellate jurisdiction; the state lacked authority to appeal defendant's judgment of conviction for a misdemeanor. Although neither the state nor defendant raised the issue of jurisdiction until after both the Court of Appeals and this court issued their opinions, the fact remains that neither court possessed authority to issue an opinion."

The state supreme court vacated the 2012 appeals court ruling and its own 2014 ruling and dismissed the state's appeal for lack of jurisdiction.

Wallace said the new ruling amounts to "never mind" what the courts did before. That could mean animals can no longer be victims of crimes. An attorney for the Animal Legal Defense Fund in Portland did not immediately return a call Monday.

DANCE: This is Seibel's fifth season coaching

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from 1A to 6A. The winners learned they were selected Friday night and performed Saturday evening for the Dance & Drill crowd.

Coach Debbie Kishpaugh has known Thorne since she started dance as a kindergarten. Thorne eventually excelled at hip-hop, jazz and ballet before joining Rhythmic Mode as a freshman. Kishpaugh called Thorne supremely talented, "silently confident" and incredibly humble.

"She doesn't have one arrogant cell in her body," Kishpaugh said.

Like Thorne, Hermiston Head Coach Ashley Seibel was shocked when named as 5A Coach of the Year.

She had just finished watching her team dance their hearts out at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum. The routine, based on Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven," featured dramatic, heart-pounding music.

"Our challenge this year was to be as big as our music," Seibel said. "The girls rose to the occasion. They gave it everything they had."

The team finished second last year and the dancers hoped to win it all in 2015. When they fell short, the disappointment was tempered when the team learned Seibel had been named top coach. Seibel, who started dancing as a five-year-old, is in her fifth season of coaching Hermiston. She knew she had been nominated, but honestly didn't figure she would win. She was happily wrong.

"I really had no idea. I am still new to this," Seibel said. "I was blown away."

STUDENTS: Nixyaawii was only able to graduate half of its 12-person class last year

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the soon-to-be-opened Pendleton Early Learning Center.

Unlike other kindergarten teachers, the position will require a candidate who can fluently speak the Umatilla language. Barring fluency, the district will seek out a teacher with an English as a second language endorsement on their teaching license and a willingness to learn the tongue.

Mooney said the teacher won't just teach Indian students but increase cultural awareness within non-Indian children as well.

If the district is successful in hiring a teacher of American Indian descent, the person would be one of the few Indian teachers on staff.

A dozen students have joined Oregon Teacher Pathways at Pendleton High School, a program designed by Eastern Oregon University to help districts cultivate teachers from their own minority student population. But given the Pathways program will take at least four to five years to see returns, the district is moving ahead in recruiting Indian teachers for next year.

The district received a \$20,000 minority teacher retention grant last year. But with so few minority teachers to retain, the Oregon Department of Education has allowed the district to use the money for recruitment instead.

Mooney said the district will expand their job fair presence to include fairs in Spokane, Idaho and Montana, areas with significant Indian populations.

Brent Spencer, lead Indian education coordinator for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, will be a part of Pendleton's envoy to offer candidates a local tribal perspective.

Ramona Halcomb, the CTUIR's education director, said those kind of ideas have made Pendleton one of the best school districts she's worked with in her 25-year career in education.

"It's hard to recruit when everyone at the table is white," she said.

The district and the tribes' combined efforts mirrors another collaboration from more than a decade ago — the opening



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Art teacher Mary Green, center, and assistant Syreeta Azure look through supplies for a traditional art class on Wednesday at the Nixyaawii Community School in Mission.

of Nixyaawii Community School.

Established in 2004, Nixyaawii offers classes in the Umatilla language, Native art and tribal drumming while offering a flexible schedule.

Despite these culturally inclusive practices and Level 4 rating from the state last year, Nixyaawii was only able to graduate half of its 12-person class last year.

Nixyaawii Principal Ryan Heinrich said one of his biggest challenges is getting students to come to school to take advantage of its classes and programs.

While attendance is an issue district-wide, Halcomb said the CTUIR is specifically targeting Indian absenteeism by offering parenting classes in historical trauma and bullying.

Academic success for Indian students is possible.

On the other side of the state, the Lincoln County School District has a similar Indian population due to its proximity to the Siletz Indian Reservation.

Last year, Lincoln County graduated 72 percent of its Indian seniors.

Clint Raever, the principal of Toledo Junior/Senior High School and the district's Indian education administrator,

said the relatively low number of Native seniors can lead to some statistical variance — last year's graduation rate was a 10 percent jump from the previous year.

But even if 2014 was an unusually good year, Lincoln County's Indian graduation rate has been at least 10 percentage points higher than the state's average in each of the past three years.

In addition to an already implemented American Indian curriculum, Raever also points to the three Indian education specialists the district employs to work one-on-one with Native students.

Despite Lincoln County's success, it's also important to note its financial resources — Lincoln County spends \$11,516 per student last year versus Pendleton's \$10,230 and is much less reliant on state funding.

But even with the funding challenges, Halcomb said the district and the tribe have done a good job pooling resources to close the gap.

Starting this year, every newly hired teacher was taken to the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute for cultural training.

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