

EAST OREGONIAN

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Senate passes \$7.3B school budget

By **PETER WONG**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A \$7.3 billion state school funding measure, though criticized by minority Republicans and education advocates, is on its way to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature. The Oregon Senate approved the budget on an 18-12 party-line vote Monday, following a debate of more than three hours and action by the House last week. The fund is \$600 million more than in the current two-year cycle, which ends June 30. And the current cycle is up \$1 billion from 2011-13, when it was at its lowest during the economic downturn. The fund supplies the lion's share of school operating costs since voters imposed statewide limits on local property taxes in the 1990s. It makes up about 40 percent of the state's \$18.5 billion general fund, which is supported by taxes and lottery proceeds, the most flexible funding sources available to lawmakers. The budget's floor manager said it will boost per-student funding by \$100 for most of Oregon's 197 districts and cushion them from most cuts. "Funding education is a difficult process. There is never enough money," said Sen. Rod Monroe, R-Portland, a retired teacher. "This does not gain anything on our deficit, but it doesn't cut anything, either."

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Bill would require B2H line reduce farm impacts

Lawmakers not optimistic legislation will succeed

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Northeast Oregon farmers have spoken loud and clear against having Idaho Power's proposed Boardman to Hemingway transmission line cut across their high-value irrigated land. One local organization is lobbying Salem for help, though lawmakers expect the effort will fall short. Senate Bill 873, introduced by the Oregon Farm Bureau with support from the Northeast Oregon Water Association, would require developers of overhead transmission lines to seek out alternative routes avoiding the region's most productive farmland. The bill would also update the definition of "highly productive farmland" to include what are known as confined animal feeding operations, such as livestock feedlots and dairies. J.R. Cook, founder and director of NOWA, said the bill is not trying to force a moratorium on energy development, but would protect hundreds of millions of dollars worth of agriculture in Umatilla and Morrow counties alone. "This is not a new issue," Cook said. "There's been legislation attempted multiple times." Boardman to Hemingway is also not a new proposal. Idaho Power identified the need for a major overhead transmission line as early as 2006 to swap power between the two regions. The 500-kilovolt line would stretch 305 miles from a substation at Boardman to just southwest of Boise in Melba, Idaho. The Bureau of Reclamation released its draft environmental report for the project in December 2014, which identified Idaho Power's preferred route for the line. Farmers were immediately concerned about where the company could to build towers in the Morrow-Umatilla project area: over irrigated fields, dairies and the massive Boardman Tree Farm. Given the interruption to normal farming practices, Cook said farmers stand to lose \$330 million in revenue over 30 years. "We don't think that's in the best value of the state," he said. "You can't make any more (of this land)." If approved, Boardman to Hemingway would cross five Eastern Oregon counties: Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Baker and Malheur. SB873 was introduced March 3 and sponsored by Sens. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, as well as Reps. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, and Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario. The bill specifically requires utilities to demonstrate their lines would be built on the least valuable farmland possible before getting the go-ahead from the Energy Facility Siting Council. If a line is built on

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Former Happy Canyon princess prepares for Miss Indian World

Pageant focuses on indigenous cultures

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

When Tyera Pete packs for the Miss Indian World pageant in New Mexico later this month, she won't worry about bringing a bikini or an evening gown. Instead, her luggage will contain such items as a buckskin dress, regalia and a saddle. Cultural knowledge trumps evening wear and spray tans during the three-day competition starting April 23 in Albuquerque. Pete, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and a 2008 Happy Canyon Princess, must demonstrate cultural knowledge, dancing ability and public speaking. Pete has dreamed of competing in the Miss Indian World pageant since she was a young girl.

"It was something I always wanted to do, but I've been too scared. I decided this was the year."
— Tyera Pete, competitor in the Miss Indian World pageant

"It was something I always wanted to do, but I've been too scared," she said. "I decided this was the year." The competition is open to unmarried women between 18 and 25 years old who can prove understanding of tribal traditions. Each prospective candidate writes a personal essay and provides two letters of recommendation and proof of tribal affiliation. This year's list of 22 contestants includes seven from Canada and 15 from the United States. "The Miss Indian World Pageant is a cultural pageant, not a beauty pageant. There is not a swimsuit or an evening gown competition," said program coordinator Melonie

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Tyera Pete of Mission will compete in this year's Miss Indian World pageant later this month at the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, N.M.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Oil train tank cars need urgent upgrades

By **MATTHEW BROWN**
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Tank cars carrying oil or ethanol by rail urgently need to be retrofitted to make them more fire-resistant after a spate of explosive accidents in recent months revealed the shortcomings of industry-backed safety standards, U.S. officials said Monday. The National Transportation Safety Board issued a series of recommendations calling for the tank cars to be fitted with protective systems better able to withstand fire than the bare steel construction now widely in use. Possible alternatives include ceramic "thermal blankets" that surround the tank to shield it from intense heat should a nearby car catch fire. The board also called for better valves that can prevent pressure from building inside tank cars as they heat up from nearby fires. And it said a decade-long retrofit timeline that's been suggested by the tank car industry was too long to wait. "The industry needs to make this issue a priority and expedite the safety en-

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Spring foal-iage

A newborn foal grazes with its mother in a pasture off Market Road on Monday in Mission.



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