



INSIDE TODAY

WEEKEND EDITION



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EAST OREGONIAN

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Bill sets rules for use of police body cams

Some argue officer discretion should be included in law

By **PETER WONG**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A negotiated bill will set the rules for how police may use body cameras to record their interactions with the public.

Under the bill, which the House Judiciary Committee approved



Edmiston

on a 7-2 vote Tuesday, videos can be released if they are determined to be in the public interest — but only if faces are made unidentifiable.

Portland is considering the issue, and the Columbia County sheriff and Hermiston police have already decided to equip their officers with cameras.

Committee Chairman Jeff Barker, a Democrat from Aloha and a retired Portland police lieutenant, said House Bill 2571 does not require agencies to use body cameras. He said its intent is to set uniform rules for agencies that choose to do so.

Officers can activate cameras “continuously” upon reasonable suspicion or probable cause that a crime or violation is being committed. The cameras can be turned off once an officer’s participation ends.

Officers must announce that a

body camera is in use unless doing so would jeopardize the officers’ safety or unreasonably impair a criminal investigation.

A defendant can have access to the video, but such recordings can otherwise be used only for law enforcement purposes. Agencies can use third-party vendors for storage, but the records belong to the agencies.

The bill does provide an exception if public interest in disclosure of the video outweighs the need to shield it. This balancing test is similar to what is applied to other

materials under Oregon’s public records law.

But requests must be “reasonably tailored” to the approximate date and time of an incident, and the video must be edited to make all faces unidentifiable.

Disclosure is still barred if a judge orders the sealing of records in a specific case or otherwise puts the video off-limits.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said he has concerns about officers recording from the point of “reasonable suspicion.”

See **CAMS/14A**

Lawmakers ask for more help when wolves attack

Barreto, Hansell signed as chief sponsors

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Eastern Oregon ranchers say they fully expect another lawsuit from conservation groups if gray wolves are removed from the state endangered species list later this year.

In the meantime, they are asking lawmakers in Salem for larger compensation for missing and killed livestock.

The Oregon Cattlemen’s Association is behind a bill that would expand tax credits for producers to offset the cost of wolf-livestock damages and apply toward “above-normal” losses attributed to wolves.

House Bill 3514 would also preserve the credits if the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission ultimately decides to delist wolves east of highways 395, 78 and 95, as was discussed Friday at the commission’s monthly meeting in Bend.

Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, are co-chief sponsors on HB3514, which passed Tuesday out of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. Barreto, who serves on that committee, said the bill would give ranchers more

See **WOLVES/14A**



Hansell



Barreto



Kindergarten teacher Lacey Sharp reviews some vocabulary with her class Thursday at Stanfield Elementary School. Stanfield switched to offering full-day kindergarten this school year.

Staff photo by

PAYING FOR ALL DAY

Large districts’ budgets hit harder by full-day kindergarten law

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

As school districts gear up for Oregon’s switch to universal full-day kindergarten next year, some Eastern Oregon districts are being hit hard while others are responding with a shrug.

Umatilla School District superintendent Heidi Sipe has been particularly vocal about the combined impact of the switch to full days and the underwhelming \$7.255 billion education budget passed last week by the state legislature. “We’ll make it happen but it won’t be easy,” she said.

The state legislature passed a bill in 2011 requiring schools to transition to free full-day kindergarten for all students by the 2015-2016 school year. At the time about 36 percent of

Oregon kindergarten students were attending for a full day.

By Sipe’s calculations, implementing the switch to full days will cost her district an extra \$326,478 next year. That’s a big chunk of change for a district that will also lose more than half a million dollars in state revenue under the legislative budget, plus federal dollars that were going to support a full-day kindergarten pilot program for some students.

Umatilla County’s other three largest districts — Hermiston, Pendleton and Milton-Freewater — are facing similarly painful decisions about what to cut to make room for the new classes created by full-day kindergarten.

The area’s smaller districts? Not so much. Most of those schools have been offering full-day kindergarten since well before the

state started to emphasize its importance.

Full-day kindergarten has been a fixture for several years in cities like Pilot Rock and Echo, and Morrow County School District has had full-day kindergarten since 1995.

In the smallest districts, offering full-day kindergarten didn’t come with any noticeable costs.

“We’re already offering it, but we’re only talking one kid,” Ukiah superintendent Dan Korber said.

Athena-Weston School District has also offered full-day kindergarten for several years, necessitating two kindergarten teachers instead of one. Superintendent Jerry Copeland said his district sees the state mandate is a positive development.

See **ALL DAY/14A**



Steve Eldridge announced he will retire as general manager and CEO of the Umatilla Electric Cooperative in 2016.

Staff photo by George Plaver

Umatilla Electric CEO Steve Eldridge announces plans to retire

A legacy of electricity

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Steve Eldridge began his career nearly 44 years ago as an engineer with the Umatilla Electric Cooperative before working his way up to general manager and CEO.

During that time, he’s had a unique vantage point for watching Hermiston and Boardman blossom from the desert.

After all, none of the region’s explosive growth in irrigated agriculture would be possible without a steady, reliable source of electricity to pump water onto the farm. It was Eldridge who designed the substations and routed transmission lines to bring power to the pivots, and would later lobby Salem to keep customer rates affordable.

With the co-op’s fortunes on the rise, Eldridge, 66, said he is now ready to retire, making the

announcement Saturday, April 18 at the annual membership meeting in Hermiston. He will remain in position until early next year when the UEC Board of Directors hopes to finish recruiting his replacement from a nationwide search.

“I felt this was the right time to retire,” Eldridge said in an interview with the *East Oregonian*. “I’ve loved this job, but I can leave without regret and with the belief we’re ready for whatever comes.”

Board president Jeff Wenholz said they have already reached out to two different recruiting firms and, if all goes well, they could have a new manager hired by March 2016.

Eldridge will be missed especially for his leadership and political savvy, Wenholz said.

“Steve’s always the person who stands up and asks the questions everybody else is afraid

See **ELDRIDGE/12A**

