

Health officials: Oregon’s high vaccine exemption rate drops

Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon’s vaccine-exemption rate has dropped, state health officials said.

Over 600 fewer kindergarten students filed for nonmedical exemptions for this school year, the Oregon Health Authority said Friday.

The drop is likely linked to a new law requiring parents seeking an exemption to talk to a doctor or watch an online video about the benefits of vaccines, officials said. The law went into effect last March.

Data show 5.8 percent of all kindergarteners — 2,693 students — claimed religious, philosophical or other nonmedical exemption to one or more required vaccines in March 2015. That’s down from 7 percent, or 3,331 students, who opted out in March 2014.

Oregon last year had the nation’s highest exemption rate. It is unclear whether the state still has the highest rate

because updated national data have not yet been released. That ranking will be released at the end of this summer by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Oregon requires all children in public and private schools, preschools, Head Start and child-care facilities to have up-to-date immunizations or an exemption.

State health officials said they worry some schools won’t be able to achieve “herd immunity,” which means enough children are vaccinated to prevent a disease from spreading.

Stacy de Assis Matthews of the Oregon Immunization Program said both California and Washington, which also instituted vaccine-education laws in recent years, also saw drops in their exemption rates.

The issue of exemptions flared up earlier this year, following a measles outbreak that began at Disneyland in California and spread to other states. But legislation

in Oregon aiming to eliminate personal, religious and philosophical exemptions was abandoned because of formidable opposition from parents, who argued it took away their medical freedom and right to informed consent.

In Washington state, a similar effort to remove personal or philosophical opposition to vaccines also failed. But in California, a bill that would eliminate the exemptions is advancing through the Legislature, despite opposition from hundreds of parents.

Mississippi and West Virginia are the only other states that have comparable laws in place.

Earlier this month, Oregon lawmakers introduced a second bill requiring all schools to make public the rate of students opting out of one or more immunizations. Opponents of the measure argue the bill would publicly shame parents who decided to opt out of some vaccines.

Lawyers spar over Hayes emails

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Lawyers for former Oregon first lady Sylvia Hayes and *The Oregonian* newspaper presented arguments in court Friday in a case that could determine whether Hayes must release her emails.

The hearing was the latest development in a lawsuit Hayes filed to stop the release of her emails. Hayes did not appear at the hearing in Marion County Circuit Court on Friday.

The Oregonian filed a request earlier this year for correspondence to and from Hayes’ personal email accounts that dealt with state business.

Although Hayes had an influential role and directed staff in the administration of former Gov. John Kitzhaber, she was not on the state payroll and never had a government email.

Hayes used several private email accounts to correspond with public employees regarding state policy, travel arrangements and her private consulting business. One of those was a Gmail account with the signature “Cylvia Hayes First Lady State of Oregon.”

The Oregon Attorney

General’s Office sided with *The Oregonian* and ordered Hayes to turn over the emails in February. Hayes then filed the lawsuit.

Separately, Hayes and former Gov. John Kitzhaber face state and federal criminal investigations into allegations the couple used their public positions for financial gain. Kitzhaber resigned Feb. 18 but has maintained that he is innocent of wrongdoing.

In the lawsuit, Hayes has asserted her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination and stated that her Constitutional rights supercede Oregon public records law.

The lawsuit also restated many of Hayes’ previous arguments against the records release, which the Oregon Department of Justice rejected in February. These included the claim that Hayes was never a public official and thus her emails are not subject to the state’s public records law.

Hayes’ attorney, Whitney P. Boise, said that if Hayes were to release emails that she believes dealt with state

business, that could reveal information prosecutors could use against her in a criminal case.

“In selecting documents and determining what is the business of the state of Oregon, that would be self-selecting, I believe, and also would be revealing her belief on something that she has a right not to incriminate herself,” Boise said. “That could be one of the very issues involved in the federal criminal investigation.”

The office of Gov. Kate Brown already released 94,000 emails between Hayes and administration staff last month, and Boise said Hayes has approximately 30,000 additional emails from the time period requested by *The Oregonian*.

Charles Hinkle, a lawyer for *The Oregonian*, said the Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination would only apply in this case it were not already known that Hayes’ emails exist. Instead, news reports have covered Hayes’ email exchanges that were already released.



Hayes

2 sea lions killed in Bonneville trap

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon and Washington temporarily suspended sea lion trapping operations at Bonneville Dam after two animals were accidentally killed.

A malfunction caused a trap door to close with nine California and Steller sea lions inside. Biologists found the dead sea lions when they opened the door to free them at 3:45 a.m. Wednesday, said Rick Hargrave, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A 1,500-pound Steller sea lion crushed the 350- to 400-pound California sea lions, a veterinarian

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determined.

The states have federal authorization to remove and euthanize California sea lions seen preying on Columbia River salmon. Fourteen have died by lethal injection so far this year, Hargrave said.

The electromagnetically operated doors on the four Bonneville traps are typically kept open and then closed remotely — like a garage-door opener — when a sea lion on the list for lethal removal appears.

Fee proposed for rail cars that carry oil

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — U.S. senators from six states on Thursday proposed

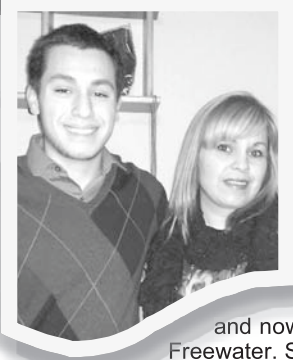
that the government charge companies a special fee to ship oil, ethanol and other flammable liquids in older railroad tank cars that have been involved in fiery explosions.

The fee would start at \$175 and increase to \$1,400 per car by 2018. It would raise an estimated \$600 million to train first responders, clean up spills and relocate rail tracks around populated areas.

The proposal would be paired with tax breaks for upgrades to newer tank cars, so they can better withstand derailments. Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon told *The Associated Press* the intent is to offer “market-based” incentives.

Blue Mountain Community College

Student Spotlight: Did You Know?



Freddy Rodriguez

AAS Student/Student Ambassador
Milton-Freewater

For Freddy Rodriguez, BMCC is all in the family! Freddy took dual credits through BMCC while still a student at McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater last year, and is now a freshman at BMCC working towards his Associate of Applied Science - Paraeducator, and will graduate in June 2016. Freddy’s mother, Maricela Gonzalez, is a 2006 graduate of BMCC who studied Early Childhood Education, and now works for the Oregon Child Development Coalition in Milton-Freewater. Says Freddy: “My mother’s attendance at BMCC motivated me and inspired me. BMCC has not only given me a very affordable education, but it has also helped me develop leadership skills. One day I hope to give back to my community.. and through BMCC and attaining my degree, I know that is something that is within my reach.”

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