



EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2015

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Brown signs bill expanding background checks

By JONATHAN J. COOPER
Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill Monday requiring background checks on firearm transfers between private parties, making Oregon the eighth state to require screening on nearly all gun sales.

The law, which takes effect immediately, requires gun buyers and sellers who aren't related to visit a licensed gun dealer who can run a background check.



Brown

"We have an obligation to protect Oregonians from gun violence," said Brown, a Democrat. "If we want to keep our kids, schools and communities safe we must make it harder for dangerous people to get guns."

Republicans vehemently opposed the measure. They say it will only burden gun owners who are committed to following the law without changing the behavior of people willing to break it.

"The good intentions behind Senate Bill 941 do not change the fact that it is a deeply flawed and unenforceable piece of legislation that targets responsible, law-abiding Oregonians," said Rep. Mike McLane, the top Republican in the House.

Brown's signature caps a long campaign by Oregon Democrats seeking stronger gun laws, which intensified following a 2012 shooting at a suburban shopping mall packed with Christmas shoppers. The bill's critics point out that the rifle used in that shooting was stolen. A 22-year-old gunman killed three people and injured a third before turning the gun on himself.

Backed by national gun-control groups, Democrats pushed for background check legislation in 2013 and 2014 but didn't have enough votes. The path to victory was paved when Democratic candidates picked up three legislative seats in the 2014 election, some of them with the help of gun-control groups such as former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Everytown for Gun Safety.

Three Democratic lawmakers are facing recall petitions that cite their support for expanded background checks, among other grievances, though the recall backers must collect thousands of signatures in a short time.



Substitute teacher Susan Talbot helps eighth-grader Ethan Wallace with his math homework in a study hall period at Sunridge Middle School in Pendleton. Talbot retired from full-time teaching last year and has been substituting part-time this year.

Simply no substitutes

Area schools struggle to find fill-in teachers

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

When teachers miss time to coach a sports team, teach at outdoor school or take personal time or sick leave, substitutes are supposed to fill their roles.

But on most days, especially in the spring, demand outweighs supply at school districts across Umatilla County.

At Sunridge Middle School Friday, substitutes were already filling in for several teachers that were absent, but that still left Christina Van Nice's class uncovered.

This spurs Sunridge faculty and staff into a well-worn juggling routine — Van Nice's eight periods will be covered by a series

of rotating teachers who fill in during their regularly scheduled "prep" periods when they have no students.

Sunridge office secretary Kelly Doherty, who regularly organizes teaching gap coverage, can only remember a handful of days this year that didn't require this sort of tactic.

While praising the faculty for their willingness to work spot duty, Doherty said teachers typically need their prep periods to catch up on work they can't do when students are in the room.

The task of filling a sub-less void is even harder for elementary school teachers and classified employees like secretaries and instructional assistants, both of whom work

continuous days.

The substitutes that are available find themselves in high demand.

Having retired from middle school teaching last year, Susan Talbot found herself back at Sunridge Friday, this time as a substitute for Tim Cary's history class. Talbot said she's rarely encountered a day where she's wanted to work and there hasn't been a sub position available. She often is able to pass on jobs from other nearby districts so she can stay in Pendleton.

As a classified employee with a substitute license, Diana Howland is a hot commodity.

While her regular job has her working

See SUBSTITUTES/8A

Morrow County asks for drought declaration

Holding meeting Thursday to consider request

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

Morrow County is joining the line to ask Oregon Gov. Kate Brown for an emergency drought declaration, as farmers and ranchers deal with oppressively dry conditions.

The county court signed off on its request May 6, which will be considered when the state Drought Council and Water Availability Committee meet in Salem on Thursday.

Requests have also been submitted by Umatilla, Grant, Deschutes and Josephine counties. Gov. Brown has already declared drought in Baker, Crook, Harney, Klamath, Lake, Malheur and Wheeler counties.

"We all consider this drought situation important, not only to our individual counties but also to the region," said Morrow County Judge Terry Tallman.

Across the region, snowpack is all but gone in the Umatilla, Willow and John Day basins. Water releases from McKay Creek Reservoir near Pendleton began about two months earlier than usual, and the reservoir itself is just 71 percent full. Cold Springs Reservoir in Hermiston is even lower, at 51 percent full.

In southern Morrow County, regulators are on the verge of imposing restrictions from Willow Creek. Ken Thiemann, district watermaster based in Condon, said the creek is flowing at 6 cubic feet per second above Willow Creek Dam near Heppner, well short of the average 26 cfs.

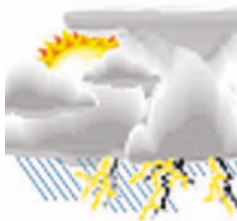
The reservoir is also about two feet lower now than it was at this time a year ago, Thiemann said. Such depleted water supplies pose a threat for ranchers who rely on irrigation to support their pastures and livestock, according to the county's drought resolution.

See DROUGHT/8A

More inside

Oregon snowpack at 11 percent
Page 8A

Weather Tuesday



63/45

Wednesday



65/41



Some room to grow

Pansies sprout up in the crack between the sidewalk and a concrete edge of a yard on Northwest Despain Avenue on Monday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



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