

VIOLENCE: 11,766 women were killed by their husbands or boyfriends between 2001 and 2012

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church one day. As director of Voices Set Free, Bauschard advocates for battered women and counsels some of them in prison after they are locked up for killing their abusers. The presentation opened Clark's eyes to the Catch-22 for some domestic violence victims.

"If she doesn't defend herself, she dies," Clark said. "If she does, she goes to prison."

Clark is clearly a busy guy. The retired State Veterinarian of Oregon regularly flies off to East Africa to help coordinate livestock disease control programs, but he found time to support legislation designed to discourage domestic abuse.

Clark invited Hansell to a meeting last fall with Bauschard, Lisa Swart (who spent 12 years in prison after killing her husband in 2000 while camping in Wallowa County) and local supporters. Hansell listened, rapt, as the pair described the life of an abused woman and why leaving is so difficult. He learned that 70 percent of domestic violence homicides happen after the woman leaves her abusive mate and that 11,766 women were killed by their husbands or boyfriends between 2001 and 2012 — more than U.S. casualties in Afghanistan, Iraq and bombings on the World Trade Center combined. According to Center for Disease Control, Oregon has the second worst record in the nation after Alaska.

The women focused on strangulation, which is the most serious predictor of future homicides. In Oregon, strangulation is a misdemeanor, while it's a felony in the majority of other states.

After some research, Hansell agreed to sponsor the Domestic Violence Shield Law backed by Clark, Bauschard and Swart.

"I've never been in a situation where I've actually observed domestic violence," Hansell said, "but I know

colleagues on both sides of the aisle. "Domestic violence is not and should not be a partisan issue — we should all be combating it at every opportunity," Hansell said. "It's a social evil. We've got to do battle."

So far, two of the bills (SB 790 and SB 788) look almost certain to become law. The other, SB 789, never made it out of committee. The bill would have made strangulation a felony, allowed people in imminent danger the ability to respond with physical force against abusers, and required officers to make lethality assessments after arresting someone for domestic assault.

Hansell said one objection was cost. Also, another bill had some of the same components. House Bill 3449 increases the penalty for strangulation from a misdemeanor to a felony, punishable by maximum of five years in prison, but only when the victim is pregnant.

Clark is frustrated that the bill wouldn't protect all women since non-fatal strangulation is the best predictor of future homicide, according to the National Family Justice Center Alliance. Death can come in as little as 20 seconds.

Lisa Swart, who says she experienced the horror of strangulation numerous times, believes abusers get only a slap on the wrist for what she calls an act of terrorism.

"Would you tell any other segment of the population it's not a felony to attempt to kill you?" Swart asked.

Hansell said he will concentrate, for now, on ground gained. He is excited about a potential task force of police chiefs, district attorneys and others that will help create a future bill.

"We have half a loaf. We got a portion of what we wanted," he said. "I'm fully confident we will get there."

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COLLEGE: Pendleton reported 64 percent enrollment in post-secondary education in 2013

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emphasize college and raised academic rigor," Sipe said, noting the school's decision to pay for dual credits for students. "These efforts have definitely paid off and we've seen a large increase in the numbers of kids pursuing college educations after high school."

She also credited partnerships with area colleges and a "dream team" of counselors shepherding students through the college application process.

Kristine Martin, school counselor at McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater, said she also has seen an increase in students graduating from high school with college enrollment already in place. She said about 80 percent of this year's graduating class has been accepted to a college.

Martin said convincing students in Milton-Freewater that college is within their reach has always been easier than in some rural school districts because of the town's proximity to schools in Walla Walla and Pendleton.

In other parts of the state rural students don't necessarily have the cost-saving option of living at home while attending college, which may drive some of the discrepancy between rural and urban post-secondary enrollment.

"Access is important," Martin said.

She said it's also important for rural educators to emphasize post-secondary education.

"I think education is definitely moving toward saying you have to get more than a high school diploma and that's something we're definitely telling our kids," she said.

As for Umatilla County's two largest districts, Pendleton School District reported a 64 percent enrollment rate in post-secondary education in 2013. Hermiston reported last year that 56 percent of the Class of 2013 enrolled in college directly after high school, and 63 percent of the Class of 2008 had gotten at least some college education post-high school by 2014.

Ashley Pierson, lead author of the study, said in a news release

that in-depth studies of college enrollment will be an important tool as Oregon works toward a goal of having 80 percent of adults graduate with some sort of post-secondary degree by 2025.

"This first look at postsecondary enrollment of rural students in Oregon can provide important information for rural K-12 educators and state policymakers looking to improve college access and readiness efforts," Pierson said. "For higher education leaders, they should dig further into their data to see if additional supports should be provided to rural students, as they often face different barriers to college success compared to nonrural students."

The one demographic for which the urban advantage was reversed was Hispanic students — rural Hispanic students are 6 percent more likely to enroll in post-secondary education than nonrural Hispanic students.

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MARIJUANA: Medford has been sued four times for its policies

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Councilman Neil Brown said he thought some residents and businesses were already abusing marijuana rules before local or state laws could go into effect.

"What happens when it's legal?" he said. "Where does it go from here? I can guarantee you it isn't going to go in the right direction."

Other members of the city council were confused by the about face.

Councilman Al Plute said marijuana was already being bought and consumed through the black market and any steps to prohibit medical marijuana dispensaries

would invite lawsuits.

"I think we're just whistling in the wind against state law," he said.

City Attorney Nancy Kerns said it was an "open question" about whether Pendleton could ban dispensaries, but noted the city of Medford has been sued four times for its anti-marijuana policies.


Councilwoman Jane Hill wondered why city officials spent months creating and passing zoning laws for dispensaries if some councilors didn't want to approve a companion business license.

Brown said the zoning laws could be used as a precautionary

measure if the state forced the city to allow dispensaries in the future. In the meantime, the city could lean on its current business license rules, which prohibit any businesses from violating federal law.

With councilors John Brenne, Young, Marks and Brown all openly opposing the passage of a marijuana business license, Mayor Phillip Houk said a new business license ordinance probably wouldn't have the votes needed for approval. No decision was made.

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