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## More voters, no signs of fraud

### Automatic registration increases rolls

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

The number of registered voters in Umatilla County increased by more than 20 percent from September 2015 to September 2016, the second largest such increase in the state.

Umatilla County elections manager Kim Lindell said there is no doubting the effect of Oregon's

"motor voter" registration, which went into effect Jan. 1 and automatically registers people to vote when they obtain or renew driver's licenses. In the first month it was instituted, the county saw a 35 percent jump in voter registration, she said.

Umatilla County had 31,251 voters on the rolls in September 2015, according to registration statistics from the Elections Division

of the Oregon Secretary of State. The total this September is 37,577, a hike of 20 percent. That's also 5,542 more than in September 2012, the year of the last presidential election.

Morrow County moved from 4,647 voters to 5,515 in the last year, an increase of 19 percent. Jefferson County had the largest percentage increase in voter registration at 24 percent. The average increase statewide is 15 percent.

The most interesting fact in this election could prove to be non-affiliated voters, Lindell said.

They account for the third-most voters in Oregon, and in Umatilla and Morrow counties they outnumber Democrats to make up the second largest bloc of local voters.

Non-affiliated registrations from September 2015 to September 2016 rose 24.3 percent in Oregon, and in Morrow County they shot up almost 48 percent while Umatilla County saw a 50 percent surge.

Lindell also said she is not

See VOTERS/8A

### Umatilla County

Republicans	↑ 9.4%	(13,622)
Democrats	↑ 9.9%	(8,696)
Independent	↑ 6.8%	(1,697)
Non-affiliated	↑ 50%	(12,648)
All others	↑ 3.5%	(914)
<b>Total</b>	<b>↑ 20.24%</b>	<b>(37,577)</b>

### Morrow County

Republicans	↑ 10.1%	(2,053)
Democrats	↑ 5.6%	(1,269)
Independent	↑ 2%	(258)
Non-affiliated	↑ 47.6%	(1,815)
All others	↑ 23.7%	(120)
<b>Total</b>	<b>↑ 18.68%</b>	<b>(5,515)</b>

Voter registration trends from September 2015 through September 2016

### PENDLETON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Charles Denight, associate director for the Pendleton Development Commission, talks about perspective loan pricing to develop a second-story property in the downtown area of Pendleton on Wednesday in the second floor of the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. building in Pendleton.

## Downtown looks up

### PDC holds workshop on second story restoration

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

It was fitting that the Pendleton Development Commission was holding a workshop on second story development in a space it could potentially help restore.

In the cavernous confines of the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co.'s

second floor, which was built as a gathering space for a masonic lodge, government officials and consultants presented information on incentive programs to commission members and local building owners.

Pendleton City Councilor and commission chairman Chuck Wood said the commission has

invested \$3.8 million into the downtown area since it was established in 2003, 40 percent of which has gone to its façade program.

The commission is now shifting some of its focus from curbside to inside — specifically some of the undeveloped upper-floor spaces in downtown buildings.

"That's really something that everyone supports — keeping these buildings used 100 years from now," said Charles Denight, the commission's associate director.

A recent housing study commissioned by the city

See PENDLETON/8A

### HERMISTON

## Test route opens for free bus system

### Finalizing plans to start in January

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Fake "bus stops" will start appearing around Hermiston soon, but the signs are a dress rehearsal for a real bus system coming to town.

The signs will provide information about a planned bus system that will transport Hermiston residents for free around town five days a week starting Jan. 2. It will be operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Kayak Transit program as a contract with the city of Hermiston.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the transit advisory committee, which is helping to plan the bus system, hopes the signs at the proposed stops will work to draw feedback on the route and times before the committee submits a final recommendation to the city council on Nov. 14. The committee will meet one more time on Nov. 1 at 5 p.m. at city hall, and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

"If they have any heartburn about it, we want to hear it at the Nov. 1 meeting," Morgan said.

The advisory committee met Tuesday and traveled the initial route the CTUIR put together, making suggestions for minor adjustments. The tribes plan to incorporate those suggestions before handing the city a map to publicize on its website and the proposed bus stops next week.

See BUS/8A

## Groups seek to ax biomass 'loophole'

By GEORGE PLAVERN  
East Oregonian

Environmentalists are calling on Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to remove provisions in legislation that would classify woody biomass as carbon neutral.

More than 20 organizations from around the state have raised concerns about what the designation will mean for the climate, local forests and public health. Specifically, they say labeling biomass as carbon neutral could exacerbate global warming and encourage clear-cutting to feed more wood-fueled power plants.

In a letter sent Oct. 12

to Democrats Wyden and Merkley, the groups argue that not all forms of biomass can be labeled carbon neutral. They want to see the Environmental Protection Agency continue with a multi-year study to determine the carbon footprints of different sources of material.

"Accounting for the carbon emitted during the combustion of biomass is an inherently complicated process and thus demands a careful scientific analysis conducted by the EPA," they wrote. "However, this scientifically-informed accounting scheme would be challenged by any blanket determination

See BIOMASS/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## Dog days of autumn

Keelo, a three-year-old German Shepard, waits patiently in the back of his owner's truck Tuesday on Emigrant Avenue in Pendleton. Keelo is owned by Tony McKague of Pilot Rock who was downtown to get a haircut.

