

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## Businesses to support tax hike in exchange for PERS reform

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Emboldened by victory in defeating a corporate sales tax measure last month, business leaders at the Oregon Leadership Summit Monday offered state policymakers and public unions a bargain: They will support new taxes if lawmakers find ways to reduce the state's pension costs.

"We all want to invest more in those programs and services that will produce outcomes for Oregonians, but in order to do that we have to be able to demonstrate to taxpayers that the dollars will, in fact, be invested in ways that will drive meaningful outcomes," said Patrick Criteser, president and chief executive officer of the Tillamook County Creamery Association.

State budget writers face a \$1.7 billion shortfall in 2017-19. In lieu of new revenue, they are forecasting cuts across state government, from higher education to human services.

The increase in costs stem largely from scaled-back federal funding for health care subsidies under the Affordable Care Act, increasing caseloads for people with disabilities and higher costs to cover the nearly \$22 billion unfunded liability in the Public Employees Retirement System.

The corporate sales tax, devised by a public employee union-backed group and contained in Measure 97, would have raised an additional \$3 billion per year, eliminating next year's revenue shortfall.

Voters rejected the tax measure after a bitter and costly battle between opponents from the business community and the union-backed coalition, A Better Oregon.

The state's relatively generous pension plan for public employees has long been a sticking point for business leaders.

"If we don't address PERS, any new taxes will not be invested in helping

See **PERS/10A**

## State budget worries local cops

Proposed cuts would affect Pendleton crime lab, drug team

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
East Oregonian

Local law enforcement leaders are ready to fight an old budget battle — keeping the state crime lab in Pendleton.

Gov. Kate Brown's state budget looks to deal with a shortfall of \$1.7 billion through a typical mix of higher taxes and fees and cuts, including eliminating 19 of 27 Oregon State Police drug enforcement detectives and closing the agency's Forensic Services Division operation in Pendleton. The police chiefs of Pendleton and Hermiston said the moves would carry serious implications.

Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston said the double murder and suicide that rocked Hermiston in August was a prime example of the value of having a local crime lab. Police arrived to the house at 130 N.W. 11th St. and secured the scene for about three hours before crime technicians from the Pendleton lab arrived and gathered evidence. Much of the delay, he explained, was due to police obtaining search warrants.

About the time lab crews finished, police found the second body at an outdoor location. Techs ate a quick meal at the Hermiston Police Department and headed out for more work.

State police gathered evidence from two scenes in one day, Edmiston said, but close the nearby lab and those techs will come from the metro area. A major crime on a late Friday afternoon could stretch the investigation of a scene into two days.

"You're going to have to have staff on that scene, protecting the integrity of that scene the entire time," Edmiston said.

State police operates Oregon's only full-service forensic laboratory system, with facilities in Clackamas, Springfield, Central Point, Bend and Pendleton. Law enforcement throughout Oregon rely on the labs.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts

See **POLICE/10A**



An Oregon State Police forensic unit van sits at the end of Country Lane in Hermiston in August during the investigation into the killing of two people. If the forensics lab in Pendleton is closed, police say, units will have to come from much further to collect and process evidence, slowing investigations.



Edmiston



Roberts

### PENDLETON

## Convention center report spurs further lead testing

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Convention Center's past as an Oregon National Guard armory has city officials thinking about its future.

The *Oregonian* published a story Friday about the high levels of lead dust in the state's armory system, including the Pendleton Convention Center, which was converted from a National Guard facility in 1990.

Back in April, the city agreed to allow *The Oregonian* to collect lead samples from the convention center's basement, a former National Guard gun range, as it put together its report.

The *Oregonian* sent the samples to Environmental Hazards Services, a testing lab in Richmond, Virginia, and released the results to the city facilities manager Glenn Graham on April 19.

Six out of the 13 samples tested positive for lead, most of them in the old firing range, which is now used for storage.

"The highest result, 470 micrograms per square foot, was



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Pendleton Convention Center was recently named in a story by *The Oregonian* as testing positive of traces of lead. The former Oregon National Guard armory used to house a gun range in the basement and was one of two sites that took part in *The Oregonian* testing survey.

nearly 12 times more than the federal safety threshold for areas used by children," *Oregonian* reporter Rob Davis wrote in the story published Friday. "It was found in the part of the range where bullets once struck their targets."

According to City Manager Robb Corbett, Graham contacted

the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and was told there weren't any lead rules that pertained to a relatively uninhabited basement.

"We didn't do anything after that," Corbett said.

Corbett said he wasn't aware

See **LEAD/10A**

### HERMISTON

## RV, house destroyed in separate fires

Pair of Jack Russell terriers rescued from adult day care

East Oregonian

Two structure fires in two days kept the Umatilla County Fire District 1 busy at the start of the week.

No one was injured in either fire, and a pair of dogs were rescued by firefighters.

On Sunday afternoon fire crews responded to a house fire in the 1300 block of Southwest 16th Street in Hermiston. The house served as the home of Roxanne Poulin Holcomb and Richard Holcomb but was also the site of Sandy's Home, an adult day care facility started in 2013 to give short breaks to caregivers of elderly or disabled adults.

Debra Poulin-Foster, who owned the house and ran Sandy's Home with her daughter Roxanne, said the building was a total loss.

"The whole roof is collapsed in on the back end of the house," she said.

She said her daughter and son-in-law were out shopping when a neighbor called 9-1-1 to report the house was on fire and then called her husband. He called her, and she immediately called her daughter to see if they had taken

See **FIRES/10A**

