

TRUMP PROPOSES IMPORT TAX
NATION/5A



DAWGS DEFEAT EAGLES
SPORTS/1B

California ponders secession
NATION/10A



EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2017

141st Year, No. 74

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

Your Weekend



- ArtWORKz exhibit opening at Tamastlikt
- EOCCO Provider Forum on pain management
- Project Community Connect in Hermiston

For times and places see Coming Events, 5A

Catch a movie



Oscar-nominated musical "La La Land" comes to Wildhorse Cineplex

For showtime, Page 5A

Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
36/23	36/22	39/26

State says schools can write off 14 hours of class time

Ed board deals with widespread closures

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Board of Education has approved a temporary rule to allow schools to opt out of 14 hours of state-mandated instructional time for this school year for inclement weather or facility closures.

The board unanimously passed the rule Thursday at the request of several school districts that closed schools for several days in December and January due to snow and ice storms statewide.

"It's really unusual circumstances that is making us consider this flexibility," said Salam Noor, deputy superintendent of the Oregon

See TIME/10A



While the graduation rate in Oregon increased by one percentage point in 2016, most local school districts found their way to even higher rates

Pendleton focuses on attendance, finds rise in graduation rate

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN and ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton School District has a reason to throw its cap in the air.

According to data released by the Oregon Department of Education Thursday, Pendleton's graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was 83.9 percent, a significant improvement from 74.5 percent in 2014-2015.

While past years have seen the district hover around the state average, the nearly 10-point bump put Pendleton well above Oregon's 74.8 percent rate.

Matt Yoshioka, Pendleton's director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, said the district's focus on attendance was a factor in getting more seniors to graduation day.

Yoshioka said studies show students that miss 10 or more days of school are put at a serious academic disadvantage.

To prevent students from becoming chronically absent, Pendleton launched a public awareness campaign, began holding weekly staff meetings to discuss attendance and hired a school support liaison for Pendleton High School to work

See PENDLETON/10A

Graduation rates compared

School/region	2015-16 Graduation rate by percent	2014-15 Graduation rate by percent	Number graduated*
Helix	100%	80%	(10) (8)
Ukiah	100	100	(2) (7)
Pilot Rock	90	78.6	(27) (22)
Athena-Weston	85.4	93.5	(41) (36)
Stanfield	85.3	82.2	(28) (34)
Morrow Co.	85.1	73.9	(118) (120)
Echo	84.6	87.5	(22) (14)
Pendleton	83.9	74.5	(218) (182)
Ione	76.9	94.4	(9) (15)
State of Oregon	74.8	73.8	(33,260) (30,984)
Milton-Freewater	73.6	74.2	(98) (91)
Umatilla	72.2	64.7	(73) (76)
Hermiston	65.7	64.1	(241) (236)

Source: Oregon Department of Education *Total diplomas awarded for the school year.
Antonio Sierra and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

Hermiston sees slight uptick, lags behind nearby growth

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Hermiston's graduation rate increased slightly in 2016, but not as much as in neighboring districts and it remains below the state average.

Hermiston School District's overall graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year is 65.7 percent, compared to the previous school year's 64.1 percent graduation rate. The state average is 74.8 percent.

Assistant superintendent Bryn Browning said the rates combine the statistics for Hermiston High School and the Innovative Learning Center, the district's alternative school, which stopped operating this year.

The graduation rate for Hermiston High School in 2015-2016 is 87.6 percent, a jump from last year's 86.5 percent. For the Innovative Learning Center, the graduation rate was 4.1 percent, but the completion rate — which includes receiving a GED or modified diploma — is 37.8 percent.

The Innovative Learning Center, which the district had operated for about five

See HERMISTON/10A

"We hold the school district's goal that all of our students will continue to improve."

—Bryn Browning, Hermiston School District Assistant superintendent

UMATILLA

No action taken on mayor's concerns over city manager

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A special Umatilla City Council meeting in executive session on Wednesday night did not end with any public action or discussion.

The media is barred from reporting on discussions that take place in executive sessions. However, on Monday Mayor David Trott told the *East Oregonian* that he had requested the special meeting to address concerns he had about city manager Russ Pelleberg.

He said one of those concerns was with the job employment application submitted by Pelleberg when he applied in 2013 to be the city's public works director. Trott left the mayor's office in 2011 and was re-elected in 2014, and wasn't



Trott



Pelleberg

involved in Pelleberg's hiring.

Pelleberg was promoted by the city council to city manager in March 2016 after the council asked then-city manager Bob Ward if he would retire early to make way for Pelleberg.

Pelleberg's application, obtained from the city by the *East Oregonian* through a public records request, showed an employment history

dating back to 1991 that included engineering positions with the city of Pasco and city of Kennewick, ownership of Columbia River Journeys and RNK Consultants, and a stint as the assistant manager of Columbia Irrigation District from 2010 to 2012.

Under reason for leaving Columbia Irrigation District Pelleberg wrote "elimination of position." Trott said he believes that is a false statement.

Public meeting minutes from a May 2012 meeting of the irrigation district's board, obtained by the *East Oregonian* on Monday, show the board voted to terminate Pelleberg's employment.

The attached instructions to then-manager Keith Martin, signed by each member of the board, state

that Pelleberg was to be terminated for "unsatisfactory performance" and given two weeks pay but "leave immediately."

However, current Columbia Irrigation District manager Howard Ellison said the district hasn't filled the assistant manager position since Pelleberg's dismissal. He noted that Martin was also dismissed by the board after Pelleberg's departure.

Pelleberg's application also states that he received an electronics technician certificate from Spokane Community College (1984-1986), Bachelor of Science in civil engineering (2001-2003) and Master of Business Administration and a concentration in executive management (2004-2007) from Breyer State

See UMATILLA/10A



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