

IMMIGRATION: 400-450 Milton-Freewater students were absent

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more than three-quarters of all students are Hispanic, 409 of the 1,082 students were absent — about 38 percent of total enrollment.

Attendance rates were slightly higher at Irrigon schools, though still well below average. About 28 percent — 242 of 853 enrolled students — were absent.

Dirk Dirksen, superintendent of the Morrow County School District which includes Boardman and Irrigon, said average attendance usually hovers around 94 percent.

Though Dirksen said he did not hear specifically from students or parents whether the protests played a role, the connection was difficult to ignore.

“There’s a lot of talk right now, as there is nationally, as to the immigrant status,” Dirksen said. “It’s part of people’s lives right now. It’s what they’re dealing with.”

In the Milton-Freewater school district that is 56 percent Latino, superintendent Rob Clark said he saw a noticeable drop in attendance. Clark said elementary school students started telling teachers Wednesday that they wouldn’t go to school the next day, and Thursday bore that out across all grade levels.

Out of a total enrollment of about 1,750, Clark estimated 400-450 students were absent Thursday, up from the 50-75 absentees the school district experiences on an average day.

Clark said he expects the students who missed time to make up their work, but he did not condemn the movement.

“I haven’t walked in their shoes,” he said. “I’m not here to judge.”

Businesses closed

In Hermiston, several businesses that employ immigrants were closed for the day, including Fiesta Foods. The grocery store had a sign noting the store was closed “in support of the community” and would resume normal operations Friday.

On Main Street, the Mexican bakery Panderia Yasmine was locked during normal business hours, as was Tienda de Princesa across the street. Mercado San Juan on Hartley Avenue was dark with no explanation, and on Hermiston Avenue Trina’s Mexican Food had a sign saying the restaurant would not be open all day.

At the United Farm Workers offices, Pacific Northwest Regional director Victoria Ruddy said that she knew some farm workers who were immigrants had chosen to work on Thursday despite the protest, but she hoped that just having fewer immigrants working across the country would help people realize how important immigrants are to farms and food production.

“Every meal you put on your table, an immigrant probably helped put it there,” she said. “We all rely on those workers to feed our families. We really do.”

At Boardman Foods, 30 employees didn’t show up to work on Thursday. Several local food processors did not respond to requests for comment, but on social media some employees said that many of their coworkers did not show up as well.

Some citizens were upset by the ban and the inconvenience it caused.

Forest Hunt, a Power City resident, said he was picked up by a shuttle service to buy groceries in town, and was surprised to find Fiesta Foods closed.

“They didn’t put it in the paper, and that’s the only way I’d know about it,” he said. “It’s puzzling if they don’t care about the inconvenience to customers.”

Hunt said he had been part of unions before, and understood the need to get people’s attention, but was upset the store didn’t alert shoppers ahead of time.

“I just thought it was a low blow not to let customers know,” he said.

Some businesses around Hermiston stayed open. La Carreta on Southwest 11th Avenue was operating as usual. Owner Armando Rodriguez said he hadn’t been aware of the movement beforehand, so he didn’t plan to close his business for the day.

“I will do it in the future if I know,” he said. “There’s lots of things going on with the new president. We don’t know what will happen.”

Gregoria Castillo, who works at the clothing store Novedades Castillo on Southwest 11th Avenue, said their business stayed open to assist others. The business also converts money and sells airplane tickets.

“We’ve had many people coming in today,” she said. “They need tickets to send to people in other places.”

Around lunchtime on Thursday, Castillo said she had seen about seven people

come in to purchase tickets, which was more than usual.

Jonathan Shaklee, a Kennewick-based immigration lawyer, said he has noticed something of a cognitive dissonance for many people surrounding Trump’s immigration policies.

“I talked to an employer 30 minutes ago,” he said. “He has multiple undocumented employees, and he’s very concerned about them. There are a number of employers who think their employees are ‘the good guys,’ and want to keep them here. And at the same time, (the owners) are Trump supporters.”

He said he’s seen people get detained for all kinds of minor crimes, such as a traffic infraction that occurred many years prior. He said those are not the people Trump says he wants to deport.

“Those ‘felons’ oftentimes have felonies for illegal re-entry, like if they went home to visit a parent and get caught coming back,” he said. “There’s a big difference between the gang members, drug traffickers and abusers, and the ‘felons’ who have one offense, like a DUI from when they were 20.”

He added that a lot of employers who feel protective of their own employees don’t seem to see the connection.

“They’re not unique, and their workers aren’t unique,” he said. “Most of the 12 million people are like that.”

Around the country

Organizers of the national movement said they expected thousands to participate or otherwise show support.

It was unclear how many people participated, but in many cities, the actions were disruptive, if not halting. More actions are being planned for May 1 — known as May Day, the internationally recognized holiday honoring workers.

“I fear every day whether I am going to make it back home. I don’t know if my mom will make it home,” said Hessel Duarte, a 17-year-old native of Honduras who lives in Austin, Texas, with his family and skipped class at his high school to take part in one of several rallies held around the country. Duarte said he arrived in the U.S. at age 5 to escape gang violence.

The protest even reached into the U.S. Capitol, where a Senate coffee shop was among the eateries that were closed as employees did not show up at work.

Organizers appealed to immigrants from all walks of life to take part, but the effects

were felt most strongly in the restaurant industry, which has long been a first step up the economic ladder for newcomers to America with its many jobs for cooks, dishwashers and servers. Restaurant owners with immigrant roots of their own were among those acting in solidarity with workers.

Expensive restaurants and fast-food joints alike closed, some perhaps because they had no choice, others because of what they said was sympathy for their immigrant employees. Sushi bars, Brazilian steakhouses, Mexican eateries and Thai and Italian restaurants all turned away lunchtime customers.

“The really important dynamic to note is this is not antagonistic, employee-against-employer,” said Janet Murguia, president of the Hispanic rights group National Council of La Raza. “This is employers and workers standing together, not in conflict.”

She added: “Businesses cannot function without immigrant workers today.”

At a White House news conference held at the lunch-hour protests unfolded, Trump boasted of his border security measures and immigration arrests of hundreds of people in the past week, saying, “We are saving lives every single day.”

Since the end of 2007, the number of foreign-born workers employed in the U.S. has climbed by nearly 3.1 million to 25.9 million; they account for 56 percent of the increase in U.S. employment over that period, according to the Labor Department.

Roughly 12 million people are employed in the restaurant industry, and immigrants make up the majority — up to 70 percent in places like New York and Chicago, according to the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, which works to improve working conditions. An estimated 1.3 million in the industry are immigrants in the U.S. illegally, the group said.

Jayati Ramakrishnan, Jade McDowell, Antonio Sierra and George Plaven contributed to this story.



AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File
In this Feb. 7 photo, Kay Aull, from left, holds a sign and chants with Beth Kohn, Paul Paz y Mino and Karen Shore outside of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, Calif.

TRUMP: Lawsuit says ban unconstitutionally blocked entry to the U.S. on the basis of religion

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defending our country. I got elected on defense of our country,” he said.

The administration asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to hold off on making any more decisions related to the lawsuit filed by the states of Washington and Minnesota until the new order is issued and then toss out the decision keeping the ban on hold.

Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said the federal government was “conceding defeat” by saying it does not want a larger appellate panel to review the decision made last week by a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit. The judges rejected the Trump administration’s claim of presidential authority and questioned its motives in ordering the ban.

The administration attacked the decision in Thursday’s court filing, saying the panel wrongly suggested some foreigners were entitled to constitutional protections and that courts could consider Trump’s campaign statements about a ban.

The lawsuit says the ban unconstitutionally blocked entry to the U.S. on the basis of religion and harmed residents, universities and sales tax revenue in the two states. Eighteen other states, including California and New York, supported the challenge.

The appeals court had asked the Trump administration and Washington and Minnesota to file arguments by Thursday on whether a larger panel of 9th Circuit judges should rehear the case.

In his filing with the 9th Circuit, Washington state Solicitor General Noah Purcell said the ruling by the three-judge panel was consistent with previous U.S. Supreme Court decisions, so there was no basis for a review.

Purcell said Trump had campaigned on the promise to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. and one week into office issued the order that “radically changed immigration policy” and “unleashed chaos around the world.”

The three-judge panel said the states had raised “serious” allegations that the ban targets Muslims, and the courts could consider statements Trump had made about shutting down Muslim immigration.

The judges also rejected the federal government’s argument that courts do not have the authority to review the president’s immigration and national security decisions.

They said the Trump administration presented no evidence that any foreigner from the seven countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — was responsible for a terrorist attack in the U.S.

FAMILIES: Shaklee said he received an increase in calls once Trump became the Republican nominee

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how to deal with emergencies.

At a meeting Wednesday night, the InterMountain Education Service District’s Migrant Education Program hosted a forum to help migrant parents learn about their rights should they encounter an immigration enforcement officer.

Jonathan Shaklee, a Kennewick-based immigration lawyer, spoke in Spanish to a crowd of more than 60 people. He answered questions about specific cases and presented general legal guidelines.

“It’s important to know your rights to protect against illegal actions by governmental officials and others,” he said.

Shaklee also answered questions about how to become a citizen or resident — many attendees had questions about how language limitations, having children in school and criminal records might affect their status, and specific questions about the process of becoming a citizen or permanent resident. Shaklee encouraged audience members who are already permanent residents to become citizens and use their ability to vote.

He reminded the audience that no two cases are alike, and that it’s important for each person or family to make a plan in case of an emergency or legal action. He reviewed scenarios, such as if a person is approached by an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agent

at home, at work, in public or on public transportation.

Shaklee gave the audience advice any lawyer would tell his client under suspicion or arrest — you have the right to remain silent and do not have to answer any questions.

“Don’t reveal your situation to government agents,” he said. “Or where you’re born or how you entered the United States. Don’t show documentation from another country.”

He advised the audience that an agent has to have an arrest or search warrant with their name on it to enter their home. And if an agent enters a home without one, get the agent’s name and their license plate number.

If confronted or questioned in a public area, Shaklee told the audience they can remain silent. He recommended remaining calm, not answering questions and leaving the area.

He also advised what to do in case of an arrest. He warned the audience that within 100 miles of the border, or at places like an airport or point of investigation, the same rights may not exist.

He advised them to find an attorney they trust, and one who is familiar with immigration law.

“They’re expensive,” he said. “But this is something that could affect your entire life.”

Shaklee said he has received an increase in calls once Trump became the Republican nominee, and even more since he was elected and took office.

“Most of my clients probably haven’t even read the executive order, or may not even know what an executive order is,” he said. “What they do know is he’s made promises to do things that are harmful to them — end sanctuary cities, build the border wall.”

Shaklee said although former president Barack Obama deported a record number of people, he didn’t incite the same level of fear in migrant families.

He added that Trump doesn’t appear to have balanced views. Shaklee said Obama, although he deported a lot of people, instituted the deferred action program and the provisional waiver, which allowed spouses of citizens or residents to ask for a waiver.

“Most of the people I talk to feel they can’t trust law enforcement the way they used to,” he said. “They can’t feel safe and secure, they’re worried about not having a place in the community. Even people with good work permits, or a promise from the government not to deport them — that doesn’t mean anything anymore.”

Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston said the Hermiston Police Department does not track immigration status.

“We encounter victims of crimes, suspects of crimes, witnesses of crimes,” he said. “We do not track current status specific to citizenship.”

Editor’s note: The presentation was given in Spanish and translated by the reporter.





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