

State of Oregon, child welfare sued over alleged child abuse

MEDFORD (AP) — A \$15.3 million lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Human Services and child welfare workers accuses them of allowing two girls to live with a known registered sex offender.

Jeremiah Ross, the girls' attorney and their new guardian, and lawyer Erin Olson filed the lawsuit. The lawsuit says the children were physically and sexually abused by a 52-year-old registered sex offender and their half-brother in 2014 when they all lived in their great-grandmother's mobile home in White City, the *Medford Mail Tribune* reported. The girls were 2 and 5 at the time.

The girls were placed under DHS's custody after the agency received a report from police in March 2014 about concerns of drug use, domestic violence and lack of food in their mother's home. The girls were given back to their mother two months later. The mother took them to the White City mobile home.

The DHS had previously stated that the girls' great-grandmother could only visit the girls at their foster home because she lived with her 52-year-old nephew

who has been registered as a sex offender since 1986. The lawsuit states that a child welfare worker had visited the family at the mobile home and met the nephew.

Another family member left messages for child welfare workers expressing concern that the children were going to live with a known sex offender. Nevertheless, the children were allowed to move there.

According to the lawsuit, the girls were regularly left in the care of their half-brother and the sex offender was often there. During that time, the lawsuit claims the girls were physically, sexually and emotionally abused.

The children eventually went to the care of a paternal grandmother who lived out of state, but the half-brother moved with them and, according to the lawsuit, the abuse continued. The grandmother did not find out about the abuse until 2015 when one of the children disclosed that her half-brother had been abusing her.

Jill Schneider, attorney for the state, a child welfare worker and a child welfare worker supervisor being sued, said she could not comment on pending litigation.

Oregon set to double recycling rate

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon's first-in-the-nation bottle recycling program will now double the payout for used soda cans and glass bottles, and frugal residents have been stockpiling for months in anticipation.

With other recycling options now commonplace, this eco-trailblazing Pacific Northwest state is hoping to revamp the program with the increase from 5 to 10 cents for bottled and canned water, soda, beer and malt beverages — regardless what their labels say.

Oregon's 1971 Bottle Bill — groundbreaking for its era in combating litter — has been replicated in nine other states and Guam. Michigan is the only other with an across-the-board 10 cent-payout, although booze and other large bottles go for 10 cents in California and 15 cents in Maine and Vermont.

The Oregon system was a big hit in those initial years. But as curbside recycling and pickup services were brought on board two decades later — not to mention effects of inflation on the nickel's value — the rates at which people cashed in their bottles and cans gradually tumbled from 90 percent averages to under 70 percent of all bottle sales statewide in 2014 and 2015.

That decline triggered the new 10-cent rate provision added to the Bottle Bill in 2011 — that takes effect Saturday.

Grocery stores and stand-alone redemption centers are bracing for a bustling weekend. Even the state Capitol press pool in Salem has been buying cases of water bottles and stockpiling the empties to pay for a pizza party.

Ted Ferrioli, state Senate Republican leader from John Day, Oregon, says he has seen schools and community



In this July 2015 file photo, Michael Swadberg turns in bottles at a Bottledrop Oregon Redemption Center in Gresham.

organizations use it for creative ways to raise money for youth camps or 4-H clubs.

Naysayers, meanwhile, criticize Oregon's system as bad policy at time when jobs and taxes are on the line to help close Oregon's looming \$1.6 billion budgeting deficit. Oregon and Iowa's Bottle Bills are unique in that private industry, not government, operates the system and claims all unredeemed refunds.

State residents cashed in slightly more than 1 billion empties in 2015, roughly two-thirds of total sales statewide, according to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission's 2017 report to the Legislature. That left almost \$30 million in gross unredeemed refunds claimed by local and national distributors such as Pepsi, Pendleton

Bottle Company and Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative participants.

Some of those funds help industry operate the program that involves transporting recyclables to processing sites and reimbursing grocery stores, which don't make a profit but are still required to accept empty containers and refund consumers.

But critics like Dan Meek, a Portland attorney and Oregon Progressive Party spokesman, said at least some of that unclaimed cash should benefit state coffers for education, health care or other public services.

"This is how the programs work in California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Connecticut," he said. "New York retains 80 percent of unclaimed refunds; Michigan retains 75 percent. Oregon currently retains 0 percent."

BRIEFLY

Group wants AG to investigate solar sales practices

PORTLAND (AP) — Consumer advocates have asked state Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum to investigate sales practices in the solar industry.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the Washington, D.C.-based Campaign for Accountability requested the investigation after reviewing nearly 60 consumer complaints filed with the Oregon Justice Department since 2012.

The group has asked for similar investigations in Florida, California and Texas.

The advocates say the complaints show a pattern of deceptive sales practices, with some solar companies misleading customers about potential energy savings and the true cost of installing panels.

Justice Department spokeswoman Kristina Edmunson says the agency was reviewing the request as well as the underlying complaints.

Jeff Bissonette is executive director of the Oregon Solar Energy Industry Association. He says his group looked into complaints filed with the Justice Department, and found the numbers to be lower than those cited by the Campaign for Accountability.

Judge rejects suit brought by woman punched at bar

PORTLAND (AP) — A woman who claimed she suffered a fractured eye socket after a drunken man punched her at an Oregon bar has lost her \$800,000 lawsuit against the business.

The Oregonian/Oregon Live reports Talisha Blevins claimed the Cabana Club in McMinnville was partially responsible for the incident because it served the man while he was visibly drunk. She had sought about \$750,000 for pain and suffering and \$44,000 for medical bills.

The bar's Portland attorney had argued that Blevins couldn't prove her claims. He also said the bartender had no idea of knowing that Patrick Allen Reimer would go on to commit the crime.

A judge agreed to dismiss the case Wednesday after finding Reimer 100 percent responsible for Blevin's damages.

Reimer is currently serving a prison term.

Judge Flynn appointed to Oregon Supreme Court

PORTLAND (AP) — Gov. Kate Brown has appointed Judge Meagan Flynn to the Oregon Supreme Court.

Flynn replaces Justice Richard Baldwin, who retired Friday.

The governor said in a statement that Flynn has earned a reputation as a smart and thoughtful judge while serving on the Oregon Court of Appeals and is regarded as fair-minded and compassionate.

Former Gov. John Kitzhaber appointed Flynn to the Appeals Court in November 2014.

She completed her undergraduate studies at Willamette University and went to law school at Gonzaga.

In another judicial move, Brown appointed Xiomara Torres Mattson to fill a vacancy on the Multnomah County Circuit Court.

Otter appeals dismissal of Idaho sage grouse lawsuit

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has appealed the dismissal of his sage grouse lawsuit, saying the state was not speculating about the damage that implementing the current federal sage grouse plans will have on private and public lands.

Otter filed the notice with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

"We are optimistic that on appeal the court will uphold Idaho sovereignty as well as the state's good faith effort to effectively manage wildlife within our borders," Otter said in a statement Friday to The Associated Press.

Sage grouse are ground-dwelling, chicken-sized birds found in 11 Western states, where as few as 200,000 remain, down from a peak population of about 16 million. The males are known for their strutting courtship ritual on breeding grounds called leks, and



In this 2015 file photo, a male sage grouse struts in the early morning hours outside Baggs, Wyo.

they produce a bubble-type sound from a pair of inflated air sacks on their necks.

The legal action by Otter was among a number of lawsuits filed in September 2015 after federal officials opted not to list sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act but announced federal land-use restrictions.

Environmental groups later filed lawsuits

contending the restrictions designed to protect sage grouse habitat didn't go far enough.

U.S. District Court Judge Emmet G. Sullivan dismissed Otter's lawsuit in January. Sullivan didn't rule on the merits of the claims, but he said Otter lacked standing because the state didn't prove it had been injured.

"We believe this appeal will show that Idaho was not 'merely speculating' about the damage that implementing the current federal sage grouse plans will have," Otter said. "Judge Sullivan's decision failed to take into account the fact that Idaho was supposed to be a full partner in developing a collaborative effort."

Otter has long complained that Idaho worked with federal agencies to come up with a sage grouse plan only to have Idaho's input ignored.

His lawsuit lists as defendants the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Interior Department's U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Agriculture Department's U.S. Forest Service.

The U.S. Department of Justice is representing the federal defendants. Its Office of Public Affairs declined to comment Friday.

Easter

Celebration Services

Easter Sunrise Service

Come worship with us in the Blue Mountains on Easter Morning! Enjoy a wonderful complimentary breakfast buffet after the service.

Sunday • April 16, 2017 • 7 AM

At the Historic Meacham Hotel in Meacham, Oregon
Music will be provided by Lon Thornburg
Speaker will be Pastor Wayne Pickens

Service organized by Blue Mountain Christian Cowboys
For questions please call (541) 276-8540 or (541) 969-2677

Peter Rabbit Breakfast

Sat. April 15thth
7:30 - 10:30 AM

\$5.00 for Breakfast
5 & under FREE

Face painting, Easter egg hunt, Crafts, & Peter Rabbit

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Easter Day, April 16th
Sunrise Worship at the Cross on the Butte: 6:30 AM
Church Worship Services: 10:30 AM

You are invited to our Easter Celebration

Sunday, April 16th at 10 o'clock

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April 9 at 10am

Maundy Thursday Supper & Tenebrae
April 13 at 6pm

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April 23 at 10am

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Listen on KUMA 1290 at 10am Sundays

Wednesday, April 12th
6:00 pm - Last Supper Communion

Sunday, April 16th
10:00 am - Resurrection Celebration

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