

BRIEFLY

Stolen truck kills four in Stockholm

STOCKHOLM (AP) — A hijacked beer truck plowed into pedestrians at a central Stockholm department store on Friday, killing four people, wounding 15 others and sending screaming shoppers fleeing in panic in what Sweden's prime minister called a terrorist attack.

A nationwide manhunt was launched and one person was arrested following the latest use of a vehicle as a weapon in Europe.

Nearby buildings were locked down for hours in the heart of the capital — including the country's parliament — and the main train station and several large malls were evacuated.

"Sweden has been attacked," Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said in a nationally televised press conference. "This indicates that it is an act of terror."

Later Friday night, Lofven laid a bouquet of red roses and lit a candle near the site of the attack. Officials announced flags at government offices would fly at half-mast Saturday to honor the victims.

Judge drops two non-capital charges in 9/11 case

MIAMI (AP) — A military judge has dismissed two of eight charges against five prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay detention center who are charged in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Army Col. James Pohl accepted a defense argument that the statute of limitations has run out on the charges. Friday's ruling strikes the charges of attacking civilian objects and destruction of property.

The defendants still face more serious charges, including nearly 3,000 counts of murder in violation of the law of war for their alleged roles planning and aiding the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001. They could get the death penalty if convicted.

Attorney Alka Prahlan said the defense will argue to strike three of the more serious charges including terrorism at a May pretrial hearing at the U.S. base in Cuba.

Michigan boy, 11, hangs himself after social media prank

DETROIT (AP) — Tysen Benz was at home when he saw social media posts indicating that his 13-year-old girlfriend had committed suicide. The posts were a prank, but the 11-year-old boy apparently believed them.

Moments later, his mother found him hanging by the neck in his room in Marquette, Michigan. Now a prosecutor is pursuing criminal charges against a juvenile accused of being involved in the scheme, which Katrina Goss described as "a twisted, sick joke."

Goss described her son as appearing "fine" just 40 minutes before she found him.

Using a cellphone he bought without his mother's knowledge, Tysen on March 14 was reading texts and other messages about the faked suicide and decided he would end his life too, his mother said.

Demand booming on college campuses for creative writing

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — Some credit the rise of social media. Others attribute it to a flourishing culture of self-expression. Whatever the reason, colleges across the United States are seeing a boom in demand for courses on creative writing.

Colleges are adding writing programs to accommodate interest in what has become the rarest of fields in the humanities — a sector that is growing, rather than losing students to science and technology.

The number of schools offering bachelor's degrees in creative writing has risen from three in 1975 to 733 today, according to the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, an industry group based at George Mason University in Virginia.

"Most of them are aware that this probably is not going to be their career. At least, I hope they're aware," said David Galef, of Montclair State University in New Jersey. "They're interested in doing something they feel is creative."

HERMISTON: City council meeting is Monday, 7 p.m.

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Morgan emphasized earlier in the week that the chamber has done a "great job" of running the conference center, the opening of a new, larger event center at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center has caused the city to re-examine where the conference center fits into the community.

The conclusion the city has reached is that the "synergy" between the two venues will likely work best when EOTEC is holding larger, more profitable events while the conference center functions more as a community center with smaller, local events and recreational classes.

"Unfortunately, that creates a bad position for the Chamber, whose compensation is partially tied to the profitability of the Conference Center," according to the agenda packet, which stated that pushing more for-profit

events to EOTEC would "hamstring" the chamber's ability to bring in as much event revenue as it has in the past.

More information about the plan that will be discussed Monday can be found in the agenda packet for the April 10 at www.hermiston.or.us/citycouncil-meetings.

The agenda for Monday also includes a request to allow city staff to pursue a \$300,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to update the city's master plan for the Hermiston Municipal Airport. The state would provide the \$30,000 in matching funds needed, reducing the local contribution to approximately \$3,300.

Monday's city council meeting is 7 p.m. at city hall, 180 NE Second Street.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

Seattle mayor denies sex abuse claims

SEATTLE (AP) — Ed Murray led a long campaign to legalize same-sex marriage in Washington state, toiled for nearly two decades as a state lawmaker and won his biggest personal political victory in 2013 when he unseated Seattle's incumbent mayor by promising the ultra-liberal city to raise the minimum hourly wage to \$15.

Just as he took on a role as a high-profile critic of President Donald Trump and prepared to launch a re-election campaign, Murray was hit Thursday with a political bombshell — accusations from three men that Murray sexually abused them in the 1980s.

On Friday, Murray held a brief news conference to deny allegations in a lawsuit by one man, saying "they were very painful for me. It was painful for my husband."

Through a spokesman he has also denied the allegations by the other men.

He said he will not step down and is sticking to re-election campaign plans but refused to answer reporters' questions, saying the case "is now a legal matter that is in the courts."

Murray's spokesman, Jeff Reading, previously suggested unnamed Murray enemies were behind the claims.

"It is not a coincidence that this shakedown effort comes within weeks of the campaign filing deadline," Reading said.

Calls to city councilmembers earlier for Friday for comment about the mayor and what impact the allegations could mean for his political future went unreturned.

Murray, 61, grew up in working class neighborhoods in and around Seattle

as one of seven children in an Irish Catholic family and became one of the state's most prominent political figures.

"Things have never come easily to me in life, but I have never backed down and I will not back down now," Murray told reporters in remarks that lasted less than 20 minutes.

As a young man, he considered joining the priesthood and spent a year at a seminary in 1976 before studying sociology at the University of Portland, a private Catholic institution.

Murray ended up working a paralegal with public defender lawyers in Portland before returning to Seattle and joining the vanguard of the gay rights movement in the 1980s, serving as campaign manager for Cal Anderson, a Seattle state senator who was the state's first openly gay member.

Anderson, Murray's mentor, died in 1995. Murray failed in his bid to win Anderson's seat, but

he was appointed to fill the legislative seat of the state representative who won the state senate campaign.

During his 18 years as a state lawmaker, Murray was the prime sponsor of Washington's gay marriage law, spearheaded an effort to protect LGBTQ youth in public schools and led the state's push to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"As a legislator, Ed was a warrior for core Democratic values," said state Sen. Reuven Carlyle, a fellow Seattle Democrat. "He was unquestionably a tough negotiator with an eye on the long game for progress."

The 2013 mayoral race was a bruising campaign that focused on whether Murray would be more liberal and effective than incumbent Mike McGinn, a fellow Democrat, in the notoriously difficult city to govern because of competing liberal factions and an older, established political order resistant to change.

SCHOOL: Helix closest to reaching the 40-40-20 goal

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of another of Kitzhaber's education initiatives — the now-defunct Oregon Education Investment Board.

As an aspiration, Mulvihill said 40-40-20 was the right call, a goal that made sure no student was left behind in the quest for high school graduation.

In more realistic terms, Mulvihill said 40-40-20 would be all but impossible to achieve. He said one of the main successes of 40-40-20 is it made educators rethink how they approached graduation.

While certain metrics and benchmarks were already well established — kindergarten readiness, third grade literacy, on-track for graduation — 40-40-20 made teachers and administrators consider post-graduation outcomes.

Through programs like Eastern Promise, Mulvihill said he thought educators were doing a good job in trying to reach the 40 percent threshold for students with bachelor's degrees. He said the next step was having the state's education system up its career technical education offerings, which would contribute toward the 40 percent of students with two-year degrees and vocational certificates.

Mulvihill said he would be in favor of keeping

40-40-20 as an aspirational framework, even if 100 percent graduation isn't attainable.

On both sides of the graduation rate spectrum, local superintendents provided a mixed assessment of 40-40-20.

Overseeing a public school system with a graduation rate that has hovered around the low 70s in recent years, Umatilla School District superintendent Heidi Sipe didn't know how doing away with 40-40-20 would affect her district because of differing expectations.

While the state might scrutinize a school district's four-year graduation rate to see how it meets 40-40-20, Sipe said Umatilla schools are less concerned with how long it takes for an individual student.

"If that student needs six years, so be it," she said.

Sipe said the district is also keen to support students in whatever career path they choose, regardless of what ratio it creates, from a student who wants to jump directly into the workforce to a kid who eventually wants to earn a Ph.D.

If the state wants districts to graduate 100 percent of their seniors and report their post-graduation progress, Sipe said the state needs to supply the money and the tools to do it.

While the state does track students who attend in-state colleges and universities, it doesn't follow students who have left the state to attend school.

Sipe said that's a problem for a community near the Oregon-Washington border, especially since many Umatilla students choose to cross the river the attend Columbia Basin College in Pasco or Washington State University Tri-Cities.

Evans, the legislator who has proposed axing 40-40-20, said underfunding is another problem with the goal. He told *The Oregonian* that the state's education system would need another billion dollars per year to make 40-40-20 a reality.

The Helix School District would seem to be the closest to reaching the 40-40-20 goal as any district in the state.

With its strong community support and small class sizes, Helix's five-year graduation rate has been 100 percent four out of the past five years.

Although he expects all 15 students in Helix's current senior class to graduate on time, Helix superintendent Darrick Cope said there's still challenges to continuing the district's perfect rate.

If a credit-deficient senior transfers to Helix or one student fails a class,

Cope said staff would be hard-pressed to keep the graduation rate unblemished.

Cope also brought up the issue of underfunding, comparing it to how the state is struggling to figure out how to fund Measure 98, a ballot measure that mandates the establishment and expansion of career technical education and drop-out prevention programs.

"I don't even have a template to access the money," he said.

Due to Helix's small class sizes, Cope said the district is able to unofficially track how their students do after high school.

He said their college attendance numbers are probably lower than they have been historically, but that's only because more students are taking a gap year or two to work a job before setting off for college. He expects that many recent Helix alums will be enrolled in college within five years of graduating.

Whether 40-40-20 goes away or not is still up in the air. After a public hearing March 22, the bill is still being considered in the Legislature's education committee.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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