



AP Photo/Don Ryan

Drone-flyin' Paul Ryan

House Speaker Paul Ryan, right, laughs as he flies a drone straight at the cameras during his visit to Intel in Hillsboro, Wednesday. Standing next to Ryan is Intel's chairman of the board of directors Andy Bryant.

Court rejects appeal from praying Bremerton football coach

SEATTLE (AP) — A federal appeals court says the Bremerton School District does not have to immediately re-hire a football coach who lost his job for praying on the field after games.

The three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. District Court of Appeals ruled unanimously Wednesday that coach Joe Kennedy's prayers did not constitute protected free speech because he was a public employee.

Kennedy previously led players in postgame prayers, but the district ordered him to stop in 2015, saying the practice violated the separation of church and state. He lost his job after he defied the ban.

He sued and asked U.S. District Judge Ronald Leighton to force the district to re-hire him while the case proceeds. Leighton refused. The 9th Circuit opinion upheld that decision.

BRIEFLY

streets or in a shelter has jumped by 6 percent from two years ago.

Oregon Housing and Community Services released the numbers Tuesday, saying the count that took place in January found 13,953 people without a place to live. That's 777 more people compared to the last count in January 2015.

Despite the increase, the number of homeless veterans declined by 9 percent. Gov. Kate Brown says that's encouraging, but more needs to be done for children, families and seniors.

Multnomah County, which includes Portland, had the most homeless people — 4,177. Nearly half reported having a serious mental illness.

The only other counties with more than 1,000 homeless people are Lane, which includes Eugene, and Marion, where Salem is located.

Idaho man throws epic eclipse festival, but few show up

CASCADE, Idaho (AP) — An Idaho man is out more than \$20,000 after organizing a solar eclipse festival that an underwhelming amount of people showed up for.

Jeff Webb's eclipse festival in Cascade was complete with campsites, shuttles for parking, eight live bands, portable toilets and food for thousands of people, KIVI-TV reported Tuesday. Webb spent nearly \$7,000 on portable toilets alone.

But to his surprise, only a few dozen eclipse enthusiasts showed up.

"It got hyped up and it hurt, so I lost over \$20,000 this weekend," Webb said, adding that he was hoping to renovate his current business venture in Nampa with festival profits.

Webb noticed the roads were much emptier than he expected — as the drivers he did see passed his festival and found somewhere else to watch. The expected influx of tens of thousands of visitors just never arrived, he said.

Business owners in town told Webb that they were actually seeing fewer people than on an average weekend.

"One even said 50 percent less business than a regular weekend," said Webb.

He said although the festival was a dud, he would do it again.

Oregon sees rise in average gas prices with solar eclipse

BEND (AP) — Central Oregon saw a spike in average gas prices in anticipation to Monday's solar eclipse and the thousands of visitors that would be coming to the state to witness the solar event.

AAA spokeswoman Marie Dodds tells the Bulletin that in Madras, the average gas price rose by 21 cents last week bringing it to \$3.03 and an average 10 cent increase was seen throughout the state. According to AAA, Oregon's unleaded regular price was the highest it's been in two years, with an average of \$2.81 a gallon. AAA found that in Bend, the average price for a gallon of regular unleaded reached \$2.87, an 11 cent increase over last week.

Dodds says the higher gas prices are predicted to linger until Labor Day passes.

Homeless population increases 6 percent

PORTLAND (AP) — A survey of Oregon's homeless population shows the number of people living on the

State economists: Taxpayers can expect a 'kicker'

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE Capital Bureau

SALEM — State economists say nearly \$464 million will be returned to taxpayers next year, after income tax collections were higher than expected.

Oregon operates on two-year budget cycles. The most recent biennial cycle concluded June 30.

When income tax collections exceed projections for the state's budget period by more than 2 percent, Oregon law requires that the money be returned to taxpayers, a phenomenon called the "kicker."

Since the state has collected about 2.3 percent more than predicted in May 2015, about \$463.5 million will be returned to personal income taxpayers during next year's tax filing period.

The estimated median rebate under the Oregon's unique "kicker" law will be \$89 for individual taxpayers, though the figure varies greatly based on income.

The kicker law was created in 1979 as a check on government growth. Because of the recession, Oregon taxpayers went eight years without a kicker before finally getting rebates in 2015.

A similar "kicker" rule applies to corporate income taxes, except

the excess is kept and set aside for education funding. Corporate excise taxes ended the biennium at about \$111 million more than the close of session forecast.

Wednesday's forecast was the first after the conclusion of a long legislative session revenue was a key point of contention between legislators who advocated for restructuring the state's tax system to boost revenue and those who wanted to cut costs.

Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, argued in a statement that the strong forecast and the expected "kicker" indicated that a sales tax on corporate sales — one of the main concepts raised by Democrats this session — was unnecessary.

"To me, this forecast signals two things: first, that we do not need a gross receipts sales tax, as our budget is in balance and our economy is producing surpluses," Ferrioli said. "And second, Oregonians will have larger refunds or lower tax bills which will act as a further economic stimulus."

In the next biennium, which began July 1 and ends June 30, 2019, the "kicker" will mean a slightly lower general fund revenue outlook, but will likely be offset by a robust lottery sales forecast, new legislation and

higher ending balances, state economists said.

While Oregon's economic growth has slowed from previous levels, overall, the state's economy is still performing well.

"Our growth still looks great compared to the typical state," said State Economist Mark McMullen, who added that there were some signs of slowdown, in indicators of income such as salaries and wages, as well as retirement and investment income.

Across Oregon, there are 8 percent more jobs than there were before the recession, state economists said Wednesday. However, there is considerable variation in that figure in different regions of the state: Southeastern Oregon has 4.1 percent fewer jobs than before the recession, while Central Oregon has 10.9 percent more jobs.

But that figure is distinct from the unemployment rate — which also varies across the state and has been improving. And while labor force participation is rising from lows in the depths of the recession, it remains below pre-recession levels, according to state economists.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast. Includes daily forecast for Today, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Regional forecast for Coastal Oregon, Eastern Washington, Eastern and Central Oregon, Cascades, Northern California. Almanac for Pendleton and Hermiston with temperature and precipitation data.

REGIONAL CITIES and WORLD CITIES. Tables showing high/low temperatures and weather conditions for various cities like Astoria, Baker City, Bend, Brookings, Burns, Enterprise, Eugene, Hermiston, John Day, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Medford, Newport, North Bend, Ontario, Pasco, Pendleton, Portland, Redmond, Salem, Spokane, Ukiah, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Yakima, Beijing, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Seoul, Sydney, Tokyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY. Map of the United States showing weather systems and precipitation. National Summary: Showers will dot the Great Lakes, while thunderstorms extend from the southern Atlantic Seaboard to the southern Plains and Rockies today. A few storms are forecast for the interior Northwest. Yesterday's National Extremes: High 109° in Needles, Calif. Low 29° in Bodie State Park, Calif. NATIONAL CITIES table with temperature and weather conditions for major cities like Albuquerque, Atlanta, Atlanta City, Baltimore, Billings, Birmingham, Boise, Boston, Charleston, SC, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Fairbanks, Fargo, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, ME, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Reno, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tucson, Washington, DC, Wichita.