

## TRANSGENDER: Earliest release date is Nov. 2018

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getting better. Watching your child suffer needlessly was the worst pain a parent can experience," Wright's mother, Victoria Wright, said. "Nobody chose this road, nobody chose to be different."

Victoria Wright said she watched her 26-year-old child's mental health spiral after her conviction on a charge of attempted armed robbery in 2013.

Wright attempted suicide three times behind bars and tried to castrate herself twice. Nearly 100 requests for hormone therapy and other treatment for her gender dysphoria diagnosis — including the use of hair removal cream and access to a curling iron — were denied or ignored, according to court documents.

The settlement applies specifically to Wright, but it also outlines significant policy changes in Oregon prisons for all transgender inmates, said Mat dos Santos, legal director for ACLU Oregon. Those include access to doctors with experience treating transgender people, mental health care tailored to those with gender dysphoria



Photo courtesy of Oregon ACLU Foundation  
**Michalle Wright (pictured in front in this family photo) says she has felt like a female inside since she was very young.**

and training for prison guards and staff, he said. There are about two dozen transgender inmates in the state's prisons, dos Santos said.

The state began providing hormone therapy for inmates about three months after Wright filed her October 2016 legal claim, dos Santos said.

In a statement, Oregon Department of Corrections Director Colette Peters said Oregon is a national leader in developing medical protocols for treating inmates with gender dysphoria and has an ongoing collaboration

with Basic Rights Oregon to provide training and resources to prison staff.

Peters did not address the individual claims in the lawsuit, including allegations that prison guards had used slurs against Wright and taunted her for being transgender.

"Although ODOC disagreed with many of the allegations in this litigation, we never disputed the basic principles that transgender individuals within our care and custody should have access to quality medical and mental health care, and

that they should be treated in a respectful, inclusive manner," Peters wrote.

Wright's mother said her daughter sensed from a very early age that she was transgender but didn't feel free to come out until her father passed away. Starting at age 16, she began to wear women's clothing and dealt with her anxiety and depression by drinking and abusing drugs, including heroin. She eventually wound up on the streets.

She was receiving therapy at a nonprofit that helps gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth and had started discussing the possibility of hormone treatments when she was raped, according to the lawsuit. She then committed the robbery that landed her in prison, her mother said Tuesday.

She accepts responsibility for her crime, her mother said, but needs more support and medical treatment while in custody.

"You are trapped inside your own body (and) your body is lying to you because your outside does not match your inside," Victoria Wright said.

Wright's earliest release date is November 2018.

## Senate GOP moves to repeal consumer rule

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Republican-led Senate narrowly voted Tuesday to repeal a banking rule that would let consumers band together to sue their bank or credit card company to resolve financial disputes.

Vice President Mike Pence cast the final vote to break a 50-50 tie. The banking industry had been lobbying hard to roll back the regulation from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The bureau had moved to ban most types of mandatory arbitration clauses found in the fine print of agreements consumers often enter into when opening a checking account or getting a credit card.

The vote reflects the effort of the Trump administration and congressional Republicans to undo regulations that the GOP argues harms the free market. The measure now moves to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president applauded the vote.

"The rule would harm our community banks and credit unions by opening the door to frivolous lawsuits by special interest trial lawyers," Sanders said.

Democratic lawmakers said the CFPB's rule would have given consumers more leverage to stop companies from financial wrongdoing. They cited the sales practices at Wells Fargo and the security breach at credit company Equifax as examples of misdeeds protected

through forced arbitration.

"So who does forced arbitration help? Wall Street banks and other huge corporations that never pay the price for cheating working people," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio.

Republicans said that the arbitration system has worked "wonderfully" for consumers. They said the payouts for the average consumer in arbitration cases are generally much larger and come more quickly than when compared to the relief gained through class-action lawsuits.

"The effort to try to characterize this as some devious system that has been created to try to stop consumers from having access to fairness is simply false," said Sen. Mike Crapo, the Republican chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. "We have a very fair system that has been working for over 100 years in this country."

Crapo said the average pay-out for consumers in class-action lawsuits against financial companies was just \$32, but lawyers stood to make millions.

Democrats argued that consumers generally don't have the time and means to pursue claims in arbitration, and since most disputes revolve around small amounts, they typically just give up. They said banks and other financial firms know that in the end they won't have pay a real price for taking advantage of a consumer.

## DRUGS: County average was one overdose death per 100,000 from 2013-15

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increase in non-medical use of prescription drugs reflects a national increase in opioid abuse. According to the report, drug overdose is the leading cause of injury death in the nation, killing more than 52,000 people in 2015.

The report states that Oregon ranks fourth in the U.S. for rates of non-medical use of pain relievers.

"The rise in misuse can be attributed to greater availability through increased sales of controlled prescription drugs, liberal prescribing of opioids by doctors, and ease of access to the drugs through family and friends," the report stated.

Data from the Oregon Health Authority notes that in 2012, 346 people died from drug overdoses in Oregon. Prescription opioids accounted for 23 percent of those deaths, followed by 16 percent from heroin and 16 percent from alcohol.

Umatilla County Health Director Jim Setzer said from 2010 to 2014, the rate of hospitalization for drug overdoses in Umatilla County was between four and five people per 100,000.

The county average was one overdose death per 100,000 from 2013 to 2015.

Setzer said collecting unused pills is one piece of fighting the opioid crisis.

"Getting unused drugs disposed of properly is one way to limit legal drugs

getting into the illegal or illicit arena," he said.

Setzer encouraged people to dispose of their pills at Saturday's drop off. He also said that he hopes the county will soon expand the opportunities for people to dispose of drugs.

Setzer said Umatilla, Union, Baker and Malheur counties recently received a grant that will let them develop programs to target prescription drug abuse more systematically. He said they would like to work with providers to help people use smaller amounts of prescription painkillers, and to make sure providers are following guidelines for pain management but not over-prescribing.

He recommended a website that people using prescription drugs can reference in case they're unsure about how to handle their medication: [www.takemedsseriouslyoregon.org](http://www.takemedsseriouslyoregon.org). The site offers simple tips for safe use, storage and disposal, such as locking up pills, only taking medication prescribed to you, and never sharing medications.

Rep. Greg Walden will hold a hearing on the nationwide opioid crisis, discussing federal efforts to combat the problem. Walden, the chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, will provide updates on the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, as well as other efforts.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
**Mark Blanchard, owner of Age Of Woods, works on a shadow box for a U.S. flag recently in Pendleton.**

## ROUND-UP: Intends to honor tavern's current lease

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the association, Pendleton Round-Up Holdings LLC and the Pendleton Round-Up Foundation — the Round-Up owns 28 acres valued at \$7.7 million in real market value and \$6.7 million in assessed value.

The 1800 block of Southwest Byers Avenue is of mutual interest to the Round-Up and the Pendleton city government — the city owns 11 properties in the area while the Round-Up owns six. With the exception of the Round-Up's most recent purchases, all of the Round-Up's properties near Byers were acquired for free in 2011.

Randy Thomas, publicity director for the Round-Up, said the organization has no immediate plans for the newly acquired property but wants to be prepared if an opportunity to grow presents itself.

"The Pendleton Round-Up lives on the good nature of

the people who own property around us," Thomas said. "If a piece of property is available, the Round-Up would probably take a look at it."

Thomas also mentioned FARM II, the second phase of a Blue Mountain Community College animal science project that would include a rodeo arena. He said the college has asked the Round-Up if such a facility could be built within the rodeo's footprint, and the rodeo board is willing to consider the prospect.

"The Round-Up in its charter was to benefit Pendleton and specifically education," he said. "We would see that potentially fitting within our prime directive."

Such an addition would take up more of the existing property, and would require the Round-Up to "spread out" or continue relying on the goodwill of nearby neighbors.

Regardless of its future plans, the association will now have to contend with being a landlord on the 125 S.W. 18th Street, which contains a

10,000 square-foot strip mall.

Parley Pearce bought the property about a decade ago with the intention of tearing the mall down, before the owners of the Frontier Tavern showed interest in staying. Besides the bar, the strip mall's other main occupant is the Age of Woods carpentry. The rest is used as a warehouse for Hamley's, which is co-owned by Pearce.

Diana Snyder, the co-owner of Frontier Tavern, said the Round-Up eventually told her husband, Harry, that it intends to honor the bar's current lease, which runs through December 2018. But Snyder said she was unsure if the Round-Up would renew the contract beyond that point.

Snyder said she and her husband have owned the Frontier Tavern for about 10 years and have amassed a loyal customer base in the process. According to Snyder, the owners wouldn't be the only group who would be affected by the tavern's closure. The bar's four employees, the Keystone RV Co. employees

who cash their checks at the bar, and the local businesses who supply their beverages and uniforms would all lose out, too.

"We'd love to stay here," Snyder said, adding that she wants advance notice from the Round-Up if it intends to have them vacate the property after the lease ends.

Thomas said there no current plans to end the lease or ask the tavern to move.

Frontier Tavern's next door neighbor, Age of Woods, is already preparing to move.

In a September interview, Age of Woods craftsman Mark Blanchard said he found out through Pearce that he needs to vacate his woodshop by Friday.

Luckily for Blanchard, Pearce has already agreed to house his shop at another property he owns — the Oak Hotel at 327 S.E. First St. in downtown Pendleton.

As for the Hamley's warehouse, Pearce said he has until the end of the year to clear it out.

## PULP: Predicts it will revitalize local straw industry with \$13M in annual purchases

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County.

"We are reaching into Eastern Oregon, down into the Milton-Freewater area," Begley said.

The mill gives farmers another market for straw, paying for a product that might otherwise be burned or plowed into the ground. Columbia Pulp predicts it will revitalize the local straw industry with \$13 million in annual purchases, while also cutting back on air emissions from burning fields.

"It's an incentive to the grower, because they are now getting revenue for something that used to be a cost," Begley said.

The process used by Columbia Pulp to spin straw into paper was first developed by Mark Lewis and William McKean, two University of Washington professors and company co-founders. Begley, who spent more than 40 years in the pulp and paper business, came out of retirement four years ago to help move the project forward.

Unlike traditional mills, Begley said turning straw into pulp does not require the same high-intensity system as cooking with wood. Instead, the \$184 million Lyons Ferry mill will operate at atmospheric conditions, without using sulfur that generates a characteristically

foul smell.

The mill will not generate any discharge, and byproducts such as cellulose, lignin and carbohydrate polymers will also be sold to make dust abatement and deicer products.

The closest town to the mill is Starbuck, Washington — population 130 — and Begley said the project will add roughly 100 jobs and \$70 million to the local communities.

"It has a huge economic impact for the area," he said.

Part of that benefit extends to wheat farmers, who will pocket between \$5 and \$10 per ton of straw, according to Begley. The company has already contracted enough

straw for three years, he said, with plenty more still available.

"As this thing evolves, we'll get more people involved," Begley said.

Stewart Wuest, a soil scientist and researcher at the federal Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center north of Pendleton, said he is in favor of farmers getting the most value out of the land, but cautioned that removing too much material could lead to a dip in crop production.

Not only does wheat straw provide cover for erosion and help retain more moisture in a low-rainfall area, but leaves behind nutrients for plants including phosphorus,

nitrogen and potassium.

"(Farmers) need to watch to make sure they're not giving away productivity," Wuest said.

Don Wysocki, extension soil scientist for Oregon State University, said the threshold for losing crop productivity depends on field rotation and yields, but he considers 50 bushels per acre to be the break-even point. Beyond 50 bushels per acre, Wysocki said it is not very practical to bale straw off the land without paying too much more for additional nutrients in the form of fertilizer.

"Whenever you harvest straw, you're exporting nutrients," he said. "You just have to be cognizant of replacing

those, and what the cost is."

Berk Davis, a wheat farmer near Adams and board member for the Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District, said he leaves about 50 percent of the stubble left over after harvest on the ground, while baling and harvesting the rest.

If the pulp mill is successful, Berk said it could add even more value to the product, which would be good news for growers.

"It could potentially become an important piece of the agriculture around here, absolutely," he said.

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.