



EAST OREGONIAN

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142nd Year, No. 91 WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar

Lawmakers take aim at unfair plea bargains

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — Some plea bargains presented to defendants deprive them of fundamental rights, say Oregon lawmakers who moved on Wednesday to make them fairer.

Defendants are sometimes even asked to give up habeas corpus — a right, dating back centuries, under which defendants face their accusers in court, according to testimony presented to the House judiciary committee.

Kirk Wintermute, an attorney from Astoria, cited a practice of authorities requiring defendants in misdemeanor cases to waive that right to appear at trial if they miss a court date. These waivers are coercive because they're sought as a condition of release from jail or to stay out of jail, Wintermute said.

If the defense attorney doesn't know why his client is absent or hasn't had contact, the attorney is required to withdraw from the case, Wintermute said. A trial then proceeds with no one at the defense table, with a guilty verdict being inevitable, Wintermute told the committee in a letter.

"Once the court's warrant is served a defendant is brought back to court for a sentencing hearing, but does not have the opportunity to face his accusers in court, cross examine witnesses, or present a defense," the lawyer said.

The House unanimously passed a bill on Wednesday that prohibits a release agreement from jail from being linked to a defendant's waiver of appearance at trial. It would also prohibit a plea agreement from being linked to a former law that was superseded by a legislation passed in 2017 that reduced sentences for certain crimes.

"I believe it is our job as legislators and policy makers to ensure we safeguard individual liberties and protect the basic rights of all our citizens," said House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, the chief sponsor of the bill, in a statement after the vote. The bill now goes to the Senate.

Williamson said more needs to be done to remedy plea agreements.

In an example of a plea agreement she cited that shows other problems, prosecutors in Portland offered to drop two of four charges against a woman, but only if she agreed to waive her rights to due process, to challenge the conviction if exculpatory evidence was later found, to challenge a sentence as unconstitutionally cruel and unusual, and the right to file a writ of habeas corpus.

The bill was endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union and opposed by the Oregon District Attorneys Association.

HERMISTON DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS AWARDS



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Rep. Greg Smith smiles during his acceptance speech for the Nobel Laureate Award at the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet on Wednesday at the Hermiston Community Center.

Shocked and honored

Award recipients turn gratitude back on city of Hermiston

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

This year's Distinguished Citizens Banquet featured the best of Hermiston's many sides: schools, businesses, emergency services and government. But the winners of the awards were humbled and, in some cases, shocked by the recognition.

"I think there's a mistake been made here," said Man of the Year Roger Bounds. "I'm pretty shocked."

Bounds and Chris Finley took the top spots as Man and Woman of the Year at Hermiston's annual celebration of community servants.

Finley, a Hermiston resident since 1979, has held many positions in the community, including city councilor and Chamber of Commerce member. An active member in the Victory Baptist Church and an avid Hermiston Bulldogs fan, Finley and her husband John run a farm and are staples at the local farmers market.

"We grow everything from asparagus to zucchini," she said.

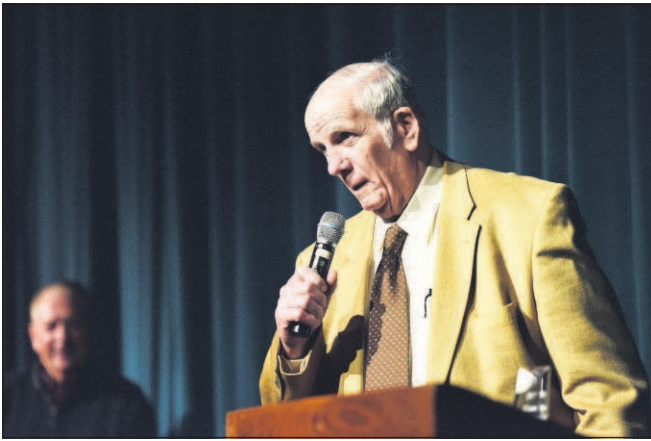
She was still in disbelief after the ceremony. "I'm stunned," she said. "I'm still shaking."

Bounds recalled that his father would always tell him that Hermiston was situated in the perfect place to succeed, located as it is along the river, railroads, and highway.

"He's right," Bounds said. "But it's not so much the location, it's the people."

Bounds has seen the community grow, having arrived when he was five years old. After coming back from Vietnam, he worked in banking and real estate at various points in his career. He has also volunteered in

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Roger Bounds speaks after being named Man of the Year at the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet on Wednesday in Hermiston.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Chris Finley reacts after being named Woman of the Year at the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet on Wednesday in Hermiston.

Winners

- Woman of the Year:** Chris Finley
Man of the Year: Roger Bounds
Altruism Award: Gabrielle Aceves-Galindo
Outstanding Young Citizen Award: Kyle Ketchersid
Merit of Honor Award: Alice Newman
Wal-Mart Distribution Center Fire Service Award: Eldon Marcum
Bob Severson Rotary Business of the Year Award: Atkinson Staffing
Greater Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Nobel Laureate Award: Greg Smith
Educator of the Year: Kent Barnes
Administrator of the Year: Larry Usher

HERMISTON

Walden gathers front line opioid suggestions



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Rep. Greg Walden, left, listens to retired Pendleton physician Dan Marier, right, talk about his experience seeing patients with opioid addiction as Carrie Sampson and Amy Ashton-Williams listen.

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Rep. Greg Walden was busy taking notes and asking questions at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston on Wednesday as Eastern Oregon residents on the front lines of the opioid crisis shared their ideas for change.

"We're very concerned about the situation locally and nationally," Good Shepherd CEO Dennis Burke told Walden.

The Republican congressman from Oregon is the chairman of the Committee on Energy And Commerce, which will begin hearings on the opioid addiction epidemic next week. Walden said finding solutions to the crisis is his "top priority" for the committee right now. They plan to start by investigating

More inside

Greg Walden's tour through Eastern Oregon included a stop at Ordnance Brewing Boardman, where he pitched the recently passed tax plan's impact on brewers. **Page 8A**

case studies in West Virginia, where tiny towns have been receiving millions of highly-addictive pain pills per year — in total enough for every man, woman and child in the state to have 433 pain pills apiece.

"We think that's been replicated elsewhere, but we can figure out the system here," Walden said.

The system has failed Oregonians,

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