

Asylum seekers released from federal prison

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — Eight of more than 100 asylum seekers who were locked up by the Trump administration in a federal prison in Oregon have been released on bond, immigration lawyers said Wednesday.

The first man to be released after being held in the prison for almost three months fell to his knees on Monday and kissed the ground after leaving the building, said Katy Mitchell of Innovation Law Lab which represents dozens of the detainees.

More detained immigrants are expected to be released on bond in coming days from the prison in rural Sheridan, northwest of Salem.

Lawyers, legal advocates, interpreters and ordinary citizens got involved to ensure those who were brought to the prison in May could “exercise one of the most basic rights the Constitution allows, which is due process,” said Victoria Bejarano Muirhead of Innovation Law Lab.

Most of the asylum seekers say they faced risks in their home countries, including India, Nepal, Guatemala,



Asylum seeker Lovepreet Singh, who had been detained at the federal prison in Sheridan, speaks along with interpreter Navneet Kaur, right, about his experiences in prison and relief at being released at the ACLU office in Portland on Wednesday.

Dave Killen/The Oregonian via AP

Mexico and China. All 79 of Innovation Law Lab’s clients in the prison were found in hearings to have a credible fear of returning home,

Bejarano Muirhead told a news conference in Portland. That’s one of the first steps in a process in which they could be granted asylum in

the United States.

One of those released this week, Karandeep Singh from India, said he was grateful to be out of the prison,

where detainees were held in crowded cells with open toilets.

“In the beginning, I had no hope. Now I feel like it’s a

dream. I’m very happy to be here,” Singh told reporters in the news conference, which was live-streamed.

A total of 124 immigrants were brought to the prison in late May after being detained at the U.S. southern border. The men were among approximately 1,600 immigrants transferred to federal prisons in five states. Immigration officials had run short of space to hold people under President Donald Trump’s “zero tolerance” immigration policy.

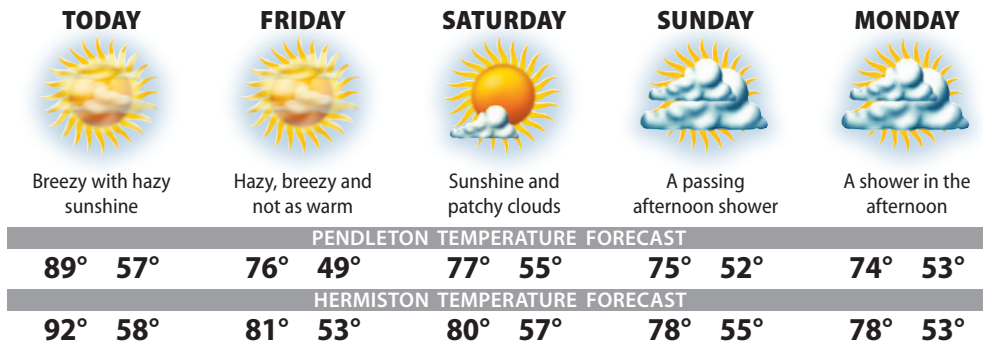
The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon filed an emergency lawsuit in June on behalf of Innovation Law Lab to force the government to allow the detainees in Sheridan access to lawyers.

After hearings determine the asylum seekers have a credible fear of being repatriated, they are eligible for release while their asylum applications are processed. The bond amounts typically run from \$1,500 to \$5,000 and are usually put up by family or friends, Bejarano Muirhead said. Not all can afford it, though, she noted.

Those freed so far are traveling to Georgia, New York, Maryland and California, where they can pursue their asylum applications.

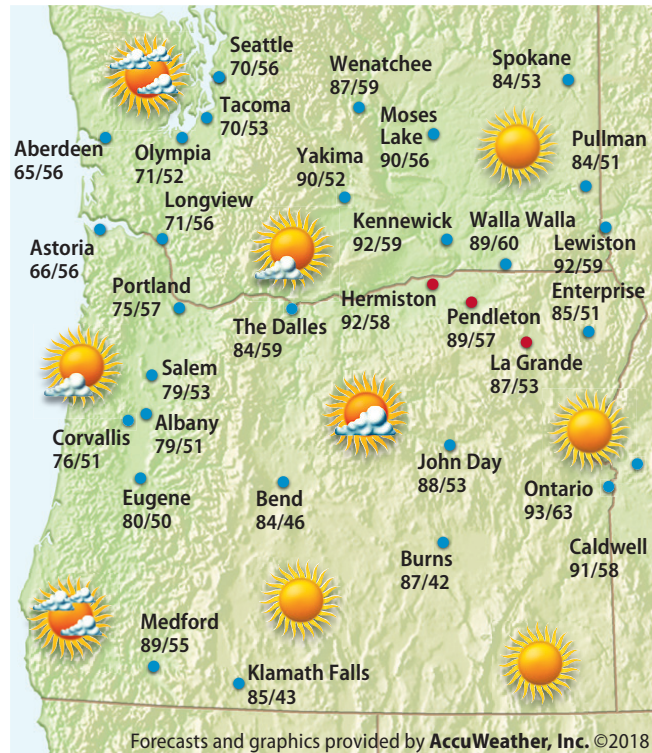
Forecast for Pendleton Area

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OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today’s weather. Temperatures are today’s highs and tonight’s lows.

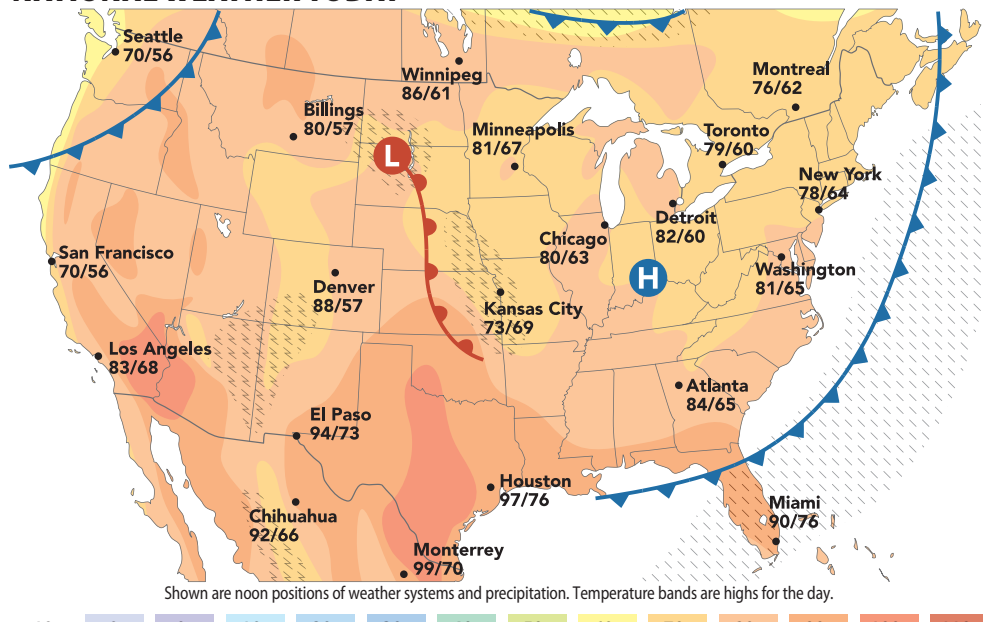


NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 107° in Needles, Calif. Low 28° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	89°	57°	
Normals	86°	56°	
Records	103° (1897)	37° (1904)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	Trace		
Normal month to date	0.30"		
Year to date	6.49"		
Last year to date	11.37"		
Normal year to date	8.25"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	90°	48°	
Normals	86°	56°	
Records	103° (1946)	41° (1960)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.03"		
Normal month to date	0.14"		
Year to date	5.13"		
Last year to date	6.65"		
Normal year to date	6.06"		
WINDS (in mph)			
	Today	Fri.	
Boardman	WSW 10-20	WSW 8-16	
Pendleton	WSW 10-20	WSW 10-20	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	6:05 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	7:50 p.m.		
Moonrise today	6:35 p.m.		
Moonset today	3:15 a.m.		
Full	Last	New	First
Aug 26	Sep 2	Sep 9	Sep 16

BRIEFLY

Earthquake, aftershock reported off Oregon Coast

COOS BAY (AP) — An earthquake and aftershock have been reported off the coast of south-central Oregon.

The United States Geological Survey says an initial quake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.2 struck just after 1:30 a.m., more than 170 miles west of Coos Bay, about 220 miles southwest of Portland.

Robert Sanders of the USGS says there is no tsunami threat associated with the quake. He says people as far away as Portland reported feeling the tremor.

Dispatch with the Coos Bay police says there have been no reports of damage or injury.

The quake was located at a depth of about 6 miles. About two hours later, an aftershock with a preliminary magnitude of 3.5 struck the area.

Mayor: Oregon to get its third In-N-Out Burger joint

SALEM (AP) — Oregon may soon get its third In-N-Out Burger joint.

Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark told the *Statesman Journal* Tuesday that the California-based fast food restaurant will soon open in her city, just 45 minutes from Portland.

The company hasn’t set a date for the opening.

In-N-Out representative Kori Seki says Oregon is considered a new market for the company.

In-N-Out has two locations in Oregon: Grants Pass and Medford.

Seki met with the Keizer City Council Monday to discuss the city’s sign code, which conflicted with the restaurant’s signature palm tree awnings and signage.

Oregon agency continued supporting solar company

PORTLAND (AP) — An Oregon agency continued to financially back a solar panel company despite its default on loan repayments to the state.

The state gave \$13.5 million in tax credits, \$10 million in direct financial assistance and millions of dollars in tax breaks to SoloPower Systems when it entered Portland eight years ago, *The Oregonian/OregonLive* reported Tuesday.

The company, which promised lighter, thinner solar panels, shut down its factory

and laid off most of its employees in 2013. It later stopped making payments on its state loan.

The Oregon Secretary of State is questioning the state Department of Energy’s decision to make rent payments on behalf of the company, which had a “history of loan default, forbearance, and restructuring,” according to a recently released audit.

The company asked for help from the state Department of Energy in paying its rent last July, receiving nearly \$642,000. Auditors found no evidence that the department received collateral or security for those payments, and it did not consult an independent expert, according to the audit.

“We had multiple discussions with Goldman Sachs from August to October 2017,” agency spokeswoman Rachel Wray said. “The investment would have made SoloPower a ‘going concern,’ meaning it could resume operations; we never saw terms that involved the (state) loan being paid in one fell swoop. Eventually that conversation went quiet, the investment didn’t go through, and we don’t have any specific information about why.”

Following the rent payments, the agency did consider giving more money to the company. Agency officials approached Gov. Kate Brown’s staff in September 2017 about an additional investment, which Brown’s office rejected, said her spokesman Chris Pair.

Ex-youth pastor attacked during sex abuse plea

MEDFORD (AP) — A former youth pastor was attacked by an unknown man in the gallery in U.S. District Court in Medford during his sentencing hearing on a sex abuse charge.

The *Mail Tribune* reports Wednesday that Donald Courtney Biggs was being sentenced on a charge of transporting a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity for filming a 14-year-old exiting a shower on a church trip.

The newspaper says it isn’t immediately clear if Biggs was injured.

Biggs pleaded guilty earlier this year to one felony sex abuse count and federal prosecutors dropped nine other charges.

He was indicted on the federal charges in 2015 after Medford police launched an initial investigation in late 2014.

Just before the attack, victims spoke about how Biggs’ crimes had impacted them.

Correction

An Aug. 22 story about new port manager Ryan Neal incorrectly stated that Neal lived in Phoenix, Arizona, before moving to Haney Truck Lines in Yakima. Neal’s last position with Knight Transportation was in California.

The article also incorrectly stated that Neal works directly under his father as the Port of Morrow Warehousing manager. He works under Mark Patton, the port’s assistant general manager. The *EO* regrets the errors.

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