

School performance ratings released; original plan to wait until after election

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown ordered the public release of annual school performance ratings Wednesday after the state's biggest newspaper reported that a Brown appointee had delayed the release of the statistical rankings until after the high-stakes gubernatorial election Nov. 6.

Brown is in a tight race with Republican challenger Rep. Knute Buehler, who has made statewide education funding and reform among his top campaign issues.

Oregon ranks third-worst in statewide four-year graduation rates and the issue is a sensitive one for voters, who already have their ballots in front of them under the state's vote-by-mail system. Brown is one of two Democratic female governors nationwide and a narrow race in this normally blue state has attracted attention well beyond Oregon's borders.

Brown did not appear at a hastily called news conference in downtown Portland, but instead sent Department of Education Director Colt Gill to address the reporting by *The Oregonian/OregonLive*.

"We should all remember that at the end of the day, this data is not about an election or politics. It's about improving our schools," Brown said in a statement. "My top priority as Governor is to give Oregon's students the tools they need to succeed."

Buehler seized on the newspaper report and Gill's subsequent news conference and said Brown was putting her re-election bid over the needs of the state's children, par-



Gill

ents and teachers. "It shouldn't take the threat of the Governor losing her election for her to do the right thing," Buehler's official campaign Twitter account posted Wednesday. "Oregonians and especially our students and parents, deserve better than this. Help is on the way in 13 days."

School districts have had the annual ranking data since Oct. 4 and had been told they could prepare public statements about their results for release Oct. 25.

But in recent days, the newspaper reported, they were told by state education officials that the data would go public after the election.

Gill, the ODE director, said Wednesday that the data was ready but that a change-over in federal testing mandates meant it needed to be presented in a new way.

He added that although the numbers were ready for release, education officials hadn't finished creating resources and supports that struggling districts could use to interpret and improve on their performance.

The new federal reporting standards also don't allow for Oregon's unique opt-out law, which allows students to choose not to take standardized tests. That means that schools where many students opted out will appear to be struggling when they may not be, he said, and the state needed to figure out how to address that discrepancy.

He decided to delay the release of the reports on his own and informed Brown's office, but did not speak with Brown herself about it.

Remains found in cabin belong to missing man

By RICHARD HANNERS
EO Media Group

Two breakthroughs in the case of the missing couple whose house burned in Grant County were announced Wednesday by the sheriff's office.

Sheriff Glenn Palmer announced that the Oregon State Medical Examiner notified his office Oct. 22 that samples of human tissue submitted for DNA testing had been partially analyzed. The samples, from remains found in the burned out residence on Nan's Rock Road, tested conclusively to be those of Terry Smith.

The sheriff's office also received confirmation from the Boise Police Department in Boise, Idaho, that the pickup truck belonging to Terry and Sharon Smith was located over the weekend.

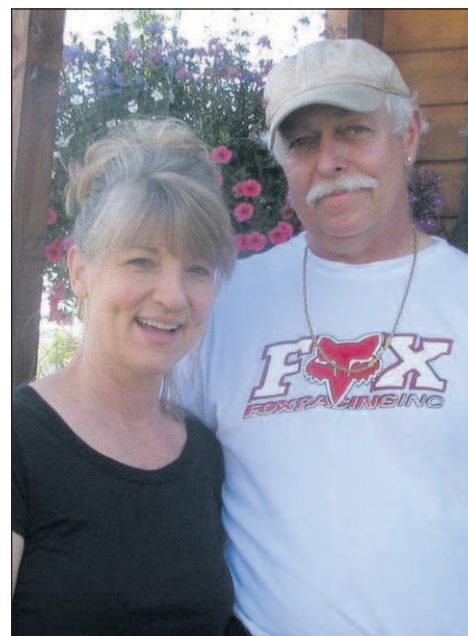
Further testing is underway on tissue samples and dental records submitted to the State Medical Examiner's Office in an attempt to locate and identify Sharon Smith, Palmer said in the press release.

The sheriff's office is jointly investigating the case with the Hilo Police Department in Hawaii County, Oregon State Police, Boise Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Palmer said.

Both in their 60s, Terry and Sharon Smith were considered a "sociable" couple by friends and family members, so their disappearance following the fire at their home in the hills south of Mount Vernon was always suspect. The disappearance of their silver 2006 Toyota Tacoma added to the mystery.

By the time first responders arrived at the cabin on Nan's Rock Road in the early morning hours of July 18, the remodeled rural cabin was completely burned and the metal roof had collapsed over the ruins.

The Smiths divided their time between a home in Hawaii and the cabin in Eastern Oregon, where Terry often fished and hunted. The Smiths were known to let



Terry and Sharon Smith.

Contributed photo

people stay on the 80- to 100-acre property in the Laycock Creek area that they bought in the mid-1990s, according to Sharon's sister Cathy Hinshaw, who lives in Hawaii.

The Smiths first met in junior high school while growing up in Springfield, Hinshaw said. Over the years the couple operated restaurants, second-hand stores, a clothing business in Bali, Indonesia, and seasonally at farmers markets in Washington.

The Smiths never had children and were always working and keeping busy. Hinshaw recalled them serving food at homeless shelters on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"Terry would give you the shirt off his back," she said, adding that he always picked up hitchhikers.

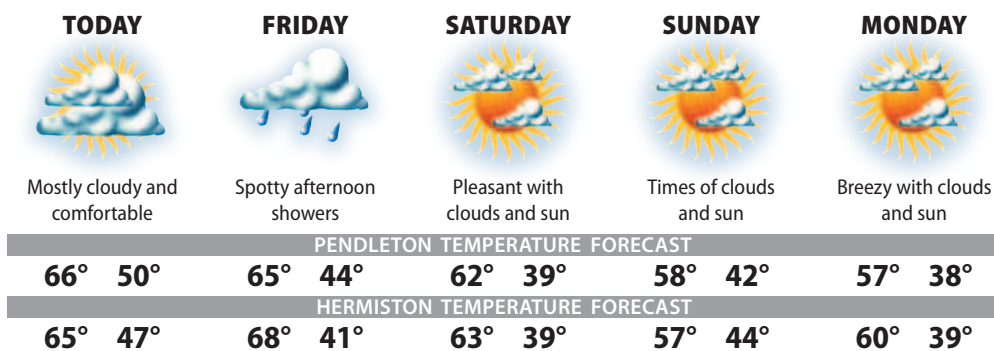
The Grant County Sheriff's Office took the lead in the investigation of the missing couple from the very beginning, with assistance from state police and the FBI. On Aug. 2, Palmer reported that his office and the FBI had made some contacts in the case and conducted numerous interviews. On Sept. 5, Palmer announced that the case was being treated as a homicide.

"Terry would give you the shirt off his back," she said, adding that he always picked up hitchhikers.

— Cathy Hinshaw, Sharon Smith's sister

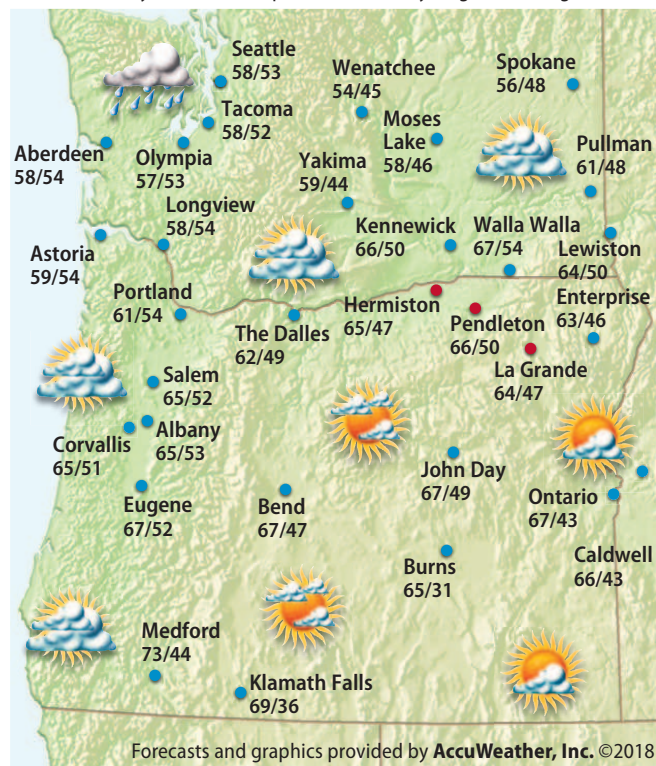
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OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

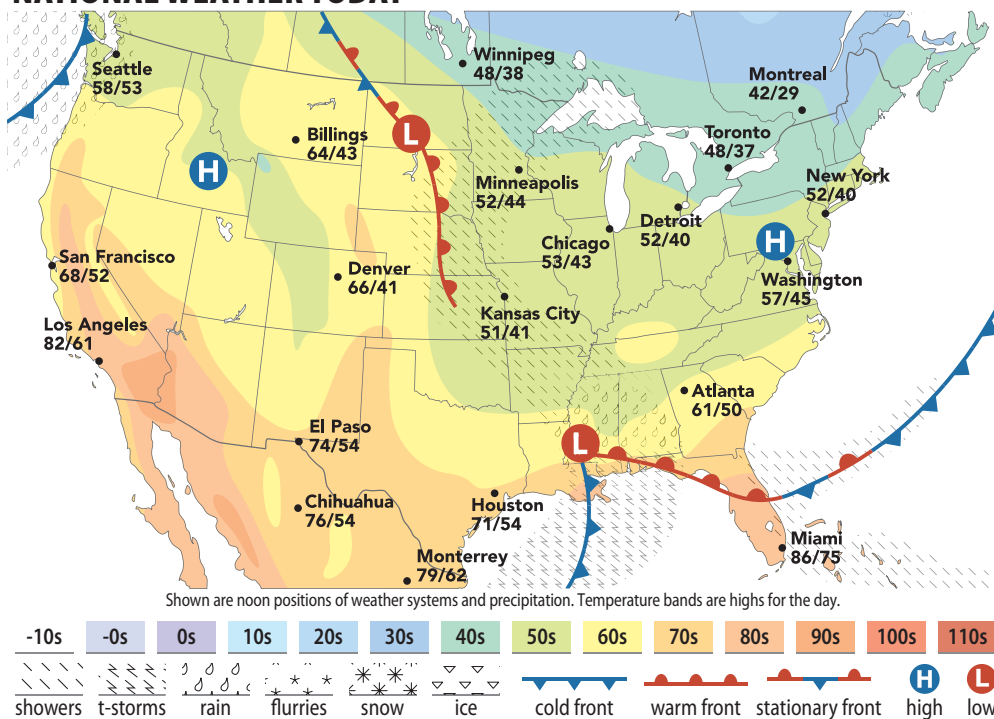
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	59°	45°		
Normals	60°	38°		
Records	82° (1933)	19° (1919)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	1.39"			
Normal month to date	0.79"			
Year to date	7.91"			
Last year to date	13.70"			
Normal year to date	9.73"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	62°	49°		
Normals	62°	37°		
Records	78° (1937)	20° (2002)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	1.14"			
Normal month to date	0.49"			
Year to date	6.29"			
Last year to date	7.80"			
Normal year to date	7.05"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Fri.		
Boardman	SW 3-6	WSW 7-14		
Pendleton	WSW 4-8	WSW 7-14		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	7:25 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	5:53 p.m.			
Moonrise today	6:57 p.m.			
Moonset today	8:16 a.m.			
	Last	New	First	Full
	Oct 31	Nov 7	Nov 15	Nov 22

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 96° in Thermal, Calif. Low 8° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



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



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.

William F. Bell, M.D.

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— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and postal holidays, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Copyright © 2018, EO Media Group

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Circulation Manager:
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