



EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2018

143rd Year, No. 47

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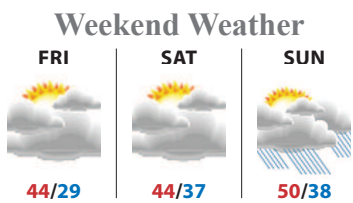
One dollar

Your Weekend



- **Pancakes** with Santa, Hermiston
- **Christmas** pageant, Pendleton
- **Christmas Eve** Service, Milton-Freewater

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS CHECK COMING EVENTS, A5



Farm bill signed without SNAP controls

By JULIET LINDERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is setting out to do what this year's farm bill didn't: tighten work requirements for millions of Americans who receive federal food assistance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Thursday proposed a rule that would restrict the ability of states to exempt work-eligible adults from having to obtain steady employment to receive food stamps.

The move comes the same day that President Donald Trump signed an \$867 billion farm bill that reauthorized agriculture and conservation programs while leaving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which serves roughly 40 million Americans, virtually untouched.

Passage of the farm bill followed months of tense negotiations over House efforts to significantly tighten work requirements and the Senate's refusal to accept the provisions. Currently, able-bodied

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Inmate Luis Gonzalez uses a saw to cut foam into squares for a couch sectional in the wood shop on Monday at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.

Products of the system

Prison program turns inmate labor into revenue, savings

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

For Pendleton city officials, the deal from Oregon Corrections Enterprises was too good to pass up.

In the midst of building a new fire station on Southeast Court Avenue, a team was tasked with ordering new furnishings for the \$9 million facility.

Working with a budget of \$202,500, Pendleton firefighter Robert Wolf said he looked at some other vendors, but OCE was the clear choice because of its low price and quality of furniture.

The fire department was able to order desks, tables, cabinets, lockers, bed frames and other



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Inmate Jeff Lumpkin removes interior wooden framing for a chair cut on a programmable CNC, computer numerical control, wood router in the wood shop Monday at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.

furnishings for \$138,996. The furniture will all be customized to fit within the specifications of the new station and the fire department can use the cost sav-

ings for other purchases for the new station.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson was succinct in his appraisal of the contract.

"It was a damn good price," he said.

Most of the furniture will be made in Umatilla, but Oregon Corrections Enterprises isn't a typical vendor.

Prison labor and work training programs have existed in state correctional institutions for more than a century, but two ballot measures in the 1990s set the wheels in motion to create OCE.

Oregon voters passed Measure 17 in 1994, establishing a law that required prisoners to work or be educated 40 hours per week. But OCE wasn't started until Measure 68 was passed in 1999, which forbid prison labor from competing with certain private enterprises.

OCE is a semi-independent state agency that reports to the director of the Oregon

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NO JOB TOO SMALL

Winter brings more demand for temporary employment

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Low unemployment numbers in Oregon and around the nation can mean a change of pace for those that help others find work — employment and staffing agencies.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Oregon's unemployment rate was 3.8 percent as of October 2018, about the same as the national rate.

Temp services in agricultural areas like Hermiston are affected somewhat by those rates, but their

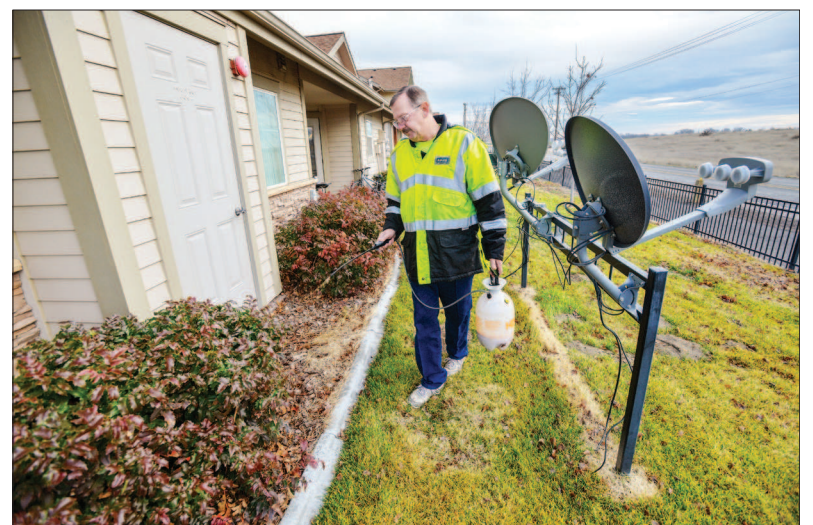
activity tends to be more cyclical.

Kristin Connell, manager at Express Employment Professionals in Hermiston, said low unemployment rates have stemmed the flow of people using their services to find jobs compared to the numbers they saw about four years ago.

But she said their business tends to depend more seasonal job trends, specific to the economy of Eastern Oregon.

During summer and fall, they tend to see more employers looking to fill positions than they have available employees, especially in agricultural jobs. In winter, when harvest season ends, few places are hiring and there tend to be more

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Maintenance supervisor David Pichcuskie sprays a homemade gopher repellent while working Thursday at the Castle Rock Apartments in Boardman.



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