

**STUDENTS
PROTEST DEATH
OF GUN BILL**
NORTHWEST, A2



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ADVANCE TO
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EAST OREGONIAN

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Conflicting claims linger over PERS reform, education funding

By **MARK MILLER**
Oregon Capital Bureau



Hass

SALEM — Educators, students and advocates celebrated as Gov. Kate Brown signed a sweeping new law that could channel about \$1 billion per year into Oregon public schools — money critics suggest could end up a casualty of spiraling retirement costs.



Roblan

Proponents say they built in safeguards to avoid just such a circumstance, and they point to a PERS reform bill that passed the Senate this week as evidence that they're working to control those costs.



Sordyl

The conflicting claims entangle two of the 2019 Legislature's most thorny issues: taxes and pensions.



Baertschiger

"Until we get a handle on the PERS problem, we are going to be faced with this in another two years," Senate Minority Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., R-Grants Pass, warned. "The PERS issue needs to be addressed, and it needs to be solved, or we will not have enough money again in two years to fund our schools appropriately."

The Student Success Act is jammed with provisions for nearly every area of need in Oregon's K-12 schools — from behavioral and mental health support to career and technical education and beyond.

About half of the money it raises from a new tax on businesses will be given to school

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STUDENTS FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

Mixed results don't deter Heppner teenagers during climate rally



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Hannah Green holds a sign in view of passing motorists during a climate change rally on Friday afternoon at Heppner City Park.

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A small town took on a big problem Friday as teenagers from Heppner staged a protest encouraging adults to tackle climate change.

They called the event "Fight for our Future." They hoped to draw a crowd of Eastern Oregon residents who were willing to learn about rising seas and greenhouse gasses. Instead, eight teens from sixth through ninth grade stood alone

at Heppner City Park, waving signs at passing cars on Main Street.

"Not everyone is thinking about the problem, and people don't want to do anything to fix it," Amelia Baker said. "Us as teens, as children, might make them listen. If they don't, we might not have a future to fight for."

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Pendleton streets could get \$3 million shot in the arm

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Pendleton City Council members past and present have long agreed that the city needs to put more money toward street maintenance, but building a political consensus around how to do it has proven to be much more difficult.

Acting as the Pendleton Development Commission, the council will get a chance to put its money where its mouth is when it considers a proposal to use \$3 million from the urban renewal district toward maintaining and improving streets at a special meeting Tuesday.

City Manager Robb Corbett, who also acts as the commission's executive director, said the money would act as a one-time expenditure for the upcoming 2019-20 fiscal year.

But the jury's still out as to how the council will decide.

Councilor Becky Marks has been a longtime proponent of focusing the money that goes toward the urban renewal district, which spans the downtown Pendleton and the surrounding area, on projects that will boost the property tax base.

So when she first heard the idea that the city was considering using some of the commission's budget for street funding, she wasn't on board.

"My gut reaction was 'No, that was not what urban renewal was designated for,'" she said.

Councilor Scott Fairley had a similar reaction, adding that one of the urban renewal district's primary responsibilities was addressing blight, not street maintenance.

Fairley has been one of the most vocal members of the council to advocate for more funding for streets.

A 2018 pavement assessment report showed that Pendleton's road quality continues to decline, and will continue to do so unless the city spends at least \$1.6 million per year for street maintenance, which would start improving the overall quality of the street system.

Using revenue from the street utility fee and a transfer from the property tax-funded general fund on top its share of gas tax revenue,

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Arrangement nearly done to create fire authority

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

The proposal to provide better fire and ambulance service across a swath of northern Umatilla County is close to becoming reality.

The boards for the East Umatilla County Rural Fire Protection District, Athena Volunteer Fire Department and the

East Umatilla County Ambulance Area Health District have approved plans to band together as the new East Umatilla Fire and Rescue. The Helix Rural Fire District board has yet to vote to join, but that's likely coming when it meets Tuesday.

Dave Baty, East Umatilla County fire chief, will step into the role of chief of the new authority. He explained Oregon

law allows the districts to band together under intergovernmental agreements. Baty said the proposal will result in better coverage and emergency response for almost 440 square miles in northern Umatilla County, from near Holdman on the west side to the Blue Mountain on the east. An eight-person board of two representatives each from the Athena City Council, Helix fire,

East Umatilla fire and the ambulance district would oversee the authority.

"An IGA is the most non-invasive way we can present this idea of joining forces, so to speak," Baty said. "This basically puts everybody under the same roof."

Getting the four emergency districts to this point took

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