



Capital Press File Photo

An Oregon congressman is urging lawmakers to pass a bill that would allow rural electric co-ops to receive government grants for disaster relief and broadband internet service, without losing tax-exempt status.

Co-op: Bill would open door for electric co-ops to receive aid

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for rural broadband without counting toward income.

Walden, a Republican whose district covers nearly all of Central and Eastern Oregon, is co-sponsoring the legislation.

“Rural electric cooperatives and other consumer-owned utilities are at the center of efforts to grow Oregon’s communities and rebuilding when disaster strikes,” Walden wrote. “The utilities and their members should not be penalized with long-term tax costs for keeping the lights and keeping power affordable for rural Oregonians.”

Keith Brooks, general manager of the Douglas Electric Cooperative in Roseburg, understands the predicament all too well.

Earlier this year, a heavy winter snowstorm damaged about 105 miles of transmission lines across the co-op’s service area, which covers about 2,200 square miles in western and southern Douglas County. Some of

the co-op’s 9,000 members were without power for up to three weeks, Brooks said.

Brooks said the storm was “beyond any other experience we’ve had as a company,” costing the co-op an estimated \$10 million.

“We worked more overtime in less than a month than we have in the last 10 years combined,” he said.

Douglas Electric Cooperative recently applied for FEMA funding to cover up to 75% of the expenses. With uncertainty around the tax law, Brooks said the grant could have a considerable impact on ratepayers if it is counted toward income.

“It’s just going to add to the burden that we are already carrying,” Brooks said.

Across the state, the Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative in Heppner has also applied for a significant USDA grant to extend fiber internet to every home and business within the service territory.

CBEC serves roughly 2,800 customers over 3,005

square miles spanning five Central and Eastern Oregon counties, including Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Wheeler and Sherman. The co-op’s board of directors approved the fiber internet initiative in 2016, which is expected to cost \$18 million at full build-out.

Thomas Wolff, CBEC general manager, said access to rural broadband is becoming more critical for farmers and ranchers that drive the region’s economy.

“From working futures on your wheat crop to ordering parts on your combine, today’s businesses run on high-speed, quality broadband,” Wolff said.

Wolff said the co-op could not afford the project without government funding. Without the RURAL Act, he said CBEC ratepayers would be required to pay substantially higher power bills due to tax penalties.

“It would be an abrupt and large increase in power rates to rural consumers due to this inadvertent oversight,” he said.

Second chances: Troubled teens learn how to succeed

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almost all the time, but eventually ease into community life when they are ready to attend class at the high school, work part-time jobs, live with foster families and do service projects around town.

Julie Smith, the district’s special education director, said Homestead averages about 22 boys at any given time. Doebler-Irvine said they generally stay about a year. All are pre-tested and tested again after 90 days. Smith said last year, of the 17 students who stayed more than 90 days, 10 students increased one grade level or more in reading. Nine caught up in math.

“Kids can work through quite a few credits in a year,” Smith said. “Our goal is to get them caught up to their grade level by the time they leave.”

Part of the success comes with a shift in mindset, Smith said.

“Students who come to us don’t believe they can learn,” she said. “With support, they find out they can.”

She said the boys benefit from positive interactions with adults.

“There are a lot of adults looking out after them, which may be new to them,” Smith said. “It is a culture of caring.”

Caring, with a huge dollop of tough love.

“Here, if they have a missing assignment, their loco parentis is right upstairs,” she said.

Much of the learning happens in the Homestead’s daylight basement, where four teachers — Travis Zander, Emily Williams, Tina Williams and



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Elisa Doebler-Irvine is the executive director of Homestead Youth and Family Services in Pendleton.

Kim Richards — have classrooms. The classrooms are typical with white boards, computers and motivational posters on the walls. Six to nine students sit in desks scattered around every classroom. Each boy starts at his own level and works his way forward in his personalized learning program.

A little room apart from the classrooms, called the think-time room, is a haven for students who feel temporarily overwhelmed. The room has no lock on the door and gives boys space to concentrate and catch their breath.

Veteran teacher Travis Zander helps the students with credit retrieval, determining what they’ve done and helping them fill in the blanks.

“Their learning levels are all over the map,” Doebler-Irvine said. “When they are behind, it’s demoralizing. They are out of step with their peers. Getting caught up gives them a sense of success.”

Zander also runs a leadership class where the boys do community service. Last spring, Homestead

residents received an award for regularly maintaining Pendleton’s youth baseball fields. On Thanksgiving, the boys brought Thanksgiving dinner to the Pendleton Warming Station.

“They go out and do good deeds,” Doebler-Irvine said.

The academic work is coupled with counseling and other sessions on everything from handling anger to balancing a checking account.

The boys may be grabbing on to their last real chance for success as an adult, said Smith, who suggested that focusing energy on them now can change a boy’s trajectory. For those who continue on the same unhealthy path, “there is a huge cost to them and to us societally.”

Doebler-Irvine loves to see them find success in the community as they discover their wings.

“It’s a lovely thing to have people see them as the young men they are today,” she said, “and not as their labels.”

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.

PENDLETON

4TH OF JULY Parade

HOSTED BY THE PENDLETON VFW "LET' ER BUCK" POST 922

10 AM THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2019

★ THEME: "Only in America" ★

STAGING AND LINE-UP:
Horse Staging Area: Western Auto/Baxter Parking Lot
Line-Up Area: SW Dorion Street

ROUTE:
From City of Pendleton building on SW Dorion to Main Street to SW Court to the Convention Center

WHO MAY ENTER:
Any Individual, Organization or Business - ALL ARE WELCOME

JUDGING:
All Entries will receive a participation ribbon. Trophies will be awarded in the following 14 Categories:
MOTORIZED - Best Club/MOTORIZED - Judges' Choice
BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL • FIRST RESPONDERS & ARMED FORCES
PEOPLE WITH PETS • BAND / DRUM & BUGLE • YOUTH DANCE & DRILL GROUPS • FLOATS • CIVIC GROUPS & SERVICE CLUBS
YOUTH GROUPS • EQUESTRIAN (2 riders or less)
EQUESTRIAN GROUPS • EQUESTRIAN GROUPS - Royalty HORSE & BUGGY/WAGON

In Addition, the VFW will award the "Patriot Trophy" to the entrant with the most overall votes (Winner of Patriot Trophy not eligible for additional trophies)

ENTRY FORMS:
May be picked up at the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, Dean's Athletic, DG Gifts, Elite Guns & Tactical and the Pendleton Downtown Association
You may also mail requests to VFW Post 922 • PO Box 787 • Pendleton, OR 97801 or email requests to: fbradbury@yahoo.com

★ Questions? Call Fred Bradbury at 541-377-7474 ★

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