

O EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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OUR VIEW

New crime lab in Pendleton is good news

Anytime there is a substantial dollar investment in the local community it is good news, and that is why the new Oregon State Police crime lab facility is significant.

The state police agency invested about \$4.5 million in the new facility on 612 Airport Road, a signal that it considers Pendleton to be an ideal site for the lab. Geographically, Pendleton makes a lot of sense as the place for a centralized station for the crime lab. The local site is also noteworthy because it will logically cut down on the time police spend traveling across the region. That means, hopefully, the time spent solving crimes will be narrowed.

For most of us the presence of a crime lab may seem mildly interesting, but such facilities are crucial for police. Especially in a place such as Eastern Oregon — where police resources are already limited — a nearby crime lab can make a real difference.

At least two top local police officials — Hermiston chief Jason Edmiston and Pendleton top cop Stu-



Staff photo by Benjamin Lonergan

The team at the new Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton have the place up and running since moving in May 15, 2019.

art Roberts — believe the lab will make an impact.

Forensic science plays a key role in our state criminal system. A crime lab can be — and often is — the difference in a conviction during a trial

of a serious crime. Conversely, labs, such as the one in town, can also be used to absolve suspects and allow law enforcement agencies to quickly focus on a criminal.

The investment by the state police

in the crime lab shows that the agency hasn't forgotten about Eastern Oregon. We also hope that at least into the foreseeable future the budget hatchet will not float over the local lab as it has so often done in the past.

The issue isn't just about the crime lab. Too often in the past state bean counters have found ways to hamstring state police funding. The state has done better over the past few years, earmarking taxpayer dollars to fund more state police, but far, far more needs to be done.

Public safety always seems to be one of those quick sound bites politicians throw out during election time and then, once the polls have closed, the talk evaporates.

But funding public safety at the state level should never really be a debate. The truth is more state troopers — and more logistical capabilities like a crime lab — are needed, not less.

The new crime lab in Pendleton is good news. Now, the next step for state lawmakers is to fund more state troopers to patrol our highways.



OTHER VIEWS

Legislature shows poor commitment to transparency

Bend Bulletin

The Oregon Legislature's interest in improving government transparency is as shallow as it can be to keep up appearances.

The latest evidence is in the fate of House Bill 2431. The bill is a product of the committee the Legislature set up to take a look at government transparency. And the Legislature is treating a bill the committee recommended like it is unworthy of passage, according to an article in *The Oregonian*.

The bill would require state agencies to take a basic step toward a better understanding of how well they comply with state law with public records. State agencies would be required to publicly disclose the number of records requests received, the number not completed

according to the law, the number not completed in 60 days and the number of requests in which an agency denied or approved a reduction or waiver in the fee.

Some agencies track requests carefully. Some do not. But it's hard to get good information about how the state is doing overall in complying with records requests without reliable data for every state agency.

Anecdotes that journalists and other members of the public can come up with are one thing. Good data is another.

Why not require it? The bill even exempts the Legislature and the judicial branch. Legislators already aren't bound by the same public records requirements, anyway. The uncertain fate of this bill is just another sign they don't care so deeply about transparency.

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