

Supporters rally for AWOL Republicans

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Supporters gathered at Roy Raley Park on Thursday afternoon to cheer Oregon's 11 fugitive senators.

The Senate Republicans skeddaddled last week to prevent a vote on cap-and-trade legislation that aims to limit greenhouse gas emissions. A couple dozen people displayed signs and sported red Trump 2020 hats. "Stay Gone Reps," said one sign. A dog sported a red cape that proclaimed "Keep America Great."

The driver of a Ford pickup honked his agreement as he cruised by. A Bud Light truck honked even louder. Someone in a red sedan slowed, read the signs, shook his head and sped off.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, was one of the lawmakers who traveled out of state to prevent a quorum for the vote. As the Pendleton group rallied, Hansell said by phone that he was back in the state.

"The governor has lifted



Two supporters of Republican senators who fled Salem last week to avoid voting on a climate bill display signs to passing motorists during a rally Thursday at Roy Raley Park.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

the call for the state police to try and find us," he said. "I'm back in Oregon."

He said he flew to California to see a new grand-

child and then to Boise to meet with some colleagues. He paused when asked when he and his fellow senators will return to the Capitol.

"It's still under discussion, but I'm optimistic things are proceeding," he said. "We're in negotiations. A news release is com-

ing most likely tomorrow (Friday)."

He said reaction from his constituents has been "overwhelmingly supportive."

With more than 100 bills that need votes before midnight on Sunday, the clock is ticking, especially since the senators again failed to show for the Thursday morning floor session.

Supporters started a GoFundMe campaign titled Encourage the Walking Senators for "traveling expenses, expenses needed while out of state, or unlawful fines imposed by Kate." The word at the rally was that a better way to donate was through the Oregon Republican Party website where donations would help pay senators' \$500 fine for each session missed.

Gov. Kate Brown sent out a steely statement earlier this week.

"This is not the Oregon Way and cannot be rewarded," Brown said in her statement. "The Republicans are driving us away from the values that Oregonians hold dear, and are

moving us dangerously close to the self-serving stalemate in Washington, D.C."

Those at the rally, however, felt the exodus from Salem was a good strategic move. Marla Schad, of La Grande, said it was the only way to ward off a bad bill.

"I'm against cap and trade," she said. "It's going to hurt loggers, truckers, farmers — anybody who uses lots of fuel."

Her friend Toni Baldassarre nodded. She wore bur-lap hatband she made herself with the word Trump cross-stitched in block letters. Her shirt proclaimed "Trump 2020: the sequel. Make the liberals cry again."

"I think Trump is doing a wonderful job," she said.

In reality, the bill seems to already dead. On Tuesday, Senate President Peter Courtney conceded the climate bill because it lacked the votes to pass even if the Republicans returned.

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EOMG Photo/Ellen Morris Bishop, File

An "intact" barrel removed from Wallowa Lake by the EPA-contracted dive team Global Diving and Salvage hangs above the oversized containment barrel that encased it before divers removed it from the lake.

Lab results show Wallowa Lake free of herbicide barrel contaminants

Barrels were discovered last August by recreational divers

By ERIN ROSS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

JOSEPH — After almost 10 months of waiting, residents of Joseph can feel more confident drinking their water and swimming in nearby Wallowa Lake, according to lab test results released Thursday.

The town, located in Oregon's northeast corner, had stopped drawing drinking water from the lake 15 days prior, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency first began investigating a number of barrels found at the bottom of the lake, thought to contain toxic her-

bicides. Test results are back, and the barrels and lake water seem to be contaminant-free.

The barrels were discovered last August by recreational divers. In all, there were 74 drums and barrels, including one that was labeled "2,4-D or 2,4,5-T." Combined at military strengths, those two herbicides create Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant widely used by the United States military during the Vietnam War, with devastating, long-lasting consequences for the landscape and the people who lived in it.

The divers brought the barrels to the attention of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality after they were found, but removal work didn't begin until June 12 of this year.

As the agency began removing barrels, it began to appear that the situation may

not be as bad as divers and environmental officials had initially feared. The barrel's label suggested it contained one or the other herbicide used to make Agent Orange — but not both — and it lacked the orange stripe used to signify military-strength chemicals. Most of the barrels were unlabeled and seemed to be empty.

The EPA took eight samples of sediment from the bottom of the lake where the barrels were found and 15 samples of lake water. Eleven of those samples were from the surface of the lake, three samples were from the city of Joseph's drinking water plant, and one sample was from the water inside the drum with the herbicide label. All of the drums tested clean, according to the EPA and the DEQ.

Hearing on big power line project draws little local interest

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The public hearing Wednesday in Pendleton on building a 500-kilovolt transmission line across Eastern Oregon drew opposition from two Umatilla County locals. Twice that many from La Grande took the mic to speak against the Boardman to Hemingway Project.

Boardman to Hemingway, or B2H, has been trudging through local and state planning processes since 2008. The Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council the past two weeks held public hearings in five Eastern Oregon counties to take comments on the new draft proposals. The hearing last week in La Grande drew about 200 people with 37 speakers, according to reporting from *The Observer*. The Umatilla County hearing drew a couple dozen in all, with the Stop B2H Coalition in their yellow T-shirts making the most obvious showing.

Jennifer Miller of Hermiston and Cynthia Harvey of Stanfield bookended the speakers expressing concerns or outright calling for an end to the project.

Miller said she cares about preserving the old Oregon Trail, and the transmission line threatens what remains of the trail.

"The trail is finite in how much there is, and once it gets ruined, it never comes back ... once it's been destroyed, it can never be brought back," she said.

Wildfires from the proj-

ect is another worry, she said, because of the strain they would place on local agencies. And she added she has no interest in giving her tax dollars to a project that helps companies sell power to other states.

Harvey told the council she bought 1,100 acres this March in Meacham and later found out Idaho Power plans to build five towers on her land, and neither the power company nor the Oregon Department of Energy notified her about the project.

Public hearings and meetings on the line in past years drew more local interest and concerns. The planning departments of Umatilla and Morrow counties worked to reroute the line through an existing power corridor that runs through the south of Umatilla County and along Bombing Range Road in Morrow County. Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock attended the hearing and said the dearth of local interest likely stems from that effort.

In between Miller and Harvey, the La Grande residents and coalition members told the council that Idaho Power needs to assess the environmental effects the construction and maintenance of the line will cause in forests, better inform private property owners of what's coming, and to take seriously the concerns people have about how the project has changed and will change their quality of life.

Coalition members Irene Gilbert and Fuji Kreider also asked the siting council to

push back the deadline for public comments from the July 23 deadline. The project's application runs to about a hundred pages, but includes dozens of attachments and exhibits. The council has been dealing with this for years, Kreider said, but the average member of the public needs more time to read and understand the documents.

Mark Stokes, the engineering project leader for B2H, took the stage last to answer questions from the council, including about the lack of notification to Harvey. He said the previous owner should have told her, but Idaho Power would work with her, just as it must with 700 land owners for the line to run between Boardman and the Hemingway substation near Melba, Idaho.

The siting council at the end voted to extend the deadline to Aug. 22 at 5 p.m. for written comments only. The council wrapped up the public hearings Thursday evening in Boardman.

BRIEFLY

Deputies arrest fleeing driver

East Oregonian

IRRIGON — A car chase in Morrow County ended with deputies pulling their guns and arresting one man. Matthew James Way, 28, of Hermiston, now faces multiple charges.

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office reported Deputy Aaron Haak at 9:48 a.m. Wednesday advised the dispatch center he was attempting to stop a 2009 white Ford Focus on Highway 730 in Irri-

gon. But the driver, Way, fled the area at speeds reaching 70 mph. Haak took off after the car, and deputies Oscar Madrigal and Taylor Wasserman joined the pursuit.

The Morrow County Communication Center informed the deputies the Hermiston Police Department took a report for the car as stolen.

The suspect at one point turned down a dead-end street, the sheriff's office reported, and Haak stopped his vehicle in the middle of the road as a barrier. Way instead turned around and sped toward Haak, according

to the sheriff's office, "in an intentional head-on collision course" only to swerve at the last moment.

The sheriff's office also reported the suspect almost hit a city of Irrigon vehicle and put others in the area in danger. The pursuit lasted 4 minutes and ended at West Eighth Street and Columbia Avenue with Haak and Madrigal aiming their guns at the driver

and passenger, and ordering them out of vehicle. Deputies detained the passenger and later released her without charges.

But they arrested Way for felony eluding, unauthorized use of a vehicle, reckless driving and five counts of reckless endangering. He remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in lieu of \$50,000 bail.

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