

Brown: Democrats tout legislative session a success

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some of those policies since entering state office in the early 1990s.

As a candidate for the House in 1992, Brown's platform was "stable, adequate" funding for public schools.

This year, lawmakers passed House Bill 3427 — which raises about \$1 billion a year in new business taxes to pay for improvements to the state's schools.

"The Student Success Act marks a turning point for education in Oregon," Brown said. "We can finally invest in an education system that will ensure every single student in our state is on a path to realizing their dreams for the future."

Some of what lawmakers did will require Oregonians to weigh in next year. Voters will be asked whether to amend the state's Constitution to allow for restrictions on campaign donations, and whether to raise taxes on cigarettes and e-cigarettes to help pay for public health care.

Lawmakers got more done than Brown said she had expected, including the paid family leave proposal and a law overturning man-

datory minimum sentences for juvenile offenders, a modification to Measure 11.

Behind those accomplishments was a political shift — and some very tough negotiations between parties.

"It was pretty stunning what we were able to accomplish," Burdick said. "We were able to accomplish it through some pretty stormy waters at the time."

In November, Democrats gained significant majorities in the House and Senate enough to pass most bills without Republican help.

However, a constitutional requirement gave Republicans leverage and came into play in a big way this session. Each chamber needed at least two Republicans to have enough legislators present to legally conduct business.

Republicans in the Senate left twice to protest major bills — the school funding measure, and then cap and trade. In so doing, the Senate couldn't vote.

The school funding legislation passed after Brown struck a deal with the Senate Republican leader to kill bills tightening restrictions on guns and requiring more

kids in public schools to get vaccinated.

But the cap-and-trade walkout was another matter, thrusting many other bills into uncertainty while lawmakers hurtled toward a June 30 deadline to finish their work.

Republicans returned Saturday, June 29, with just enough time to pass a full budget for the state before adjourning.

The House Republican caucus said the session was "defined by overreach."

"The failure of cap-and-trade was a turning point," House Republican Leader Carl Wilson said in a statement. "The thousands of workers that came to the Capitol this past week sent a clear message to the supermajority that enough is enough."

Sen. Herman Baertschiger, Jr., R-Grants Pass, who leads Republicans in the Senate and spearheaded what were two improbably successful strikes by his party, could not be reached for comment.

"The progressive policies that my Democrat colleagues have wanted for many years, they were successful in passing an enor-

mous number of things that are going to affect Oregonians significantly," said Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario. "I can say some were good. Many, I voted against because I think they're overreaching."

Bentz pointed to the gross receipts tax on business to raise money for schools, a new law to allow undocumented immigrants to get driver's licenses and to limit what crimes qualify for sentencing to the death penalty. Versions of each of those policies have gone before Oregon voters via ballot measure in the past.

"I think it's been rather surprising that these changes have been made without chance for the people of Oregon to weigh in on them," Bentz said.

It was with a detectable sense of relief that lawmakers adjourned on Sunday evening, but some lawmakers have raised concerns about how the Legislature functions in the future.

Some Republicans say their constituents aren't heard when one party dominates the political process.

"The communities that we represent out in rural Oregon have just as many

rights as the folks in Portland do," said Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, before lawmakers adjourned. "And that's really all I'm speaking to, is that there needs to be a renewing of mutual respect between the two parties and between the majority and the minority."

Democrats have worried publicly about a breakdown of the Legislature's institutional norms.

"If you look at the institution and the hit it took, it's at least D and maybe even an F," said Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem. "It was really troubling to me to see this institution get clobbered the way I think it was getting clobbered. And I am concerned about that."

"I think it's really clear that Senate Republican actions have subverted the Democratic process," Brown said. "And instead of staying at the table and engaging in a productive discussion, they took their marbles and went home."

She said it was an "important conversation" for the Senate and House to have about whether to change the state's quorum rules.

Since time limits on legis-

lative sessions were enacted, lawmakers must act more quickly to get their work done and a walkout is more disruptive.

Baertschiger told reporters on Friday that he was reluctant to walk out and thinks the tactic could be abused in the future.

Bentz said it should only be used in "the most incredibly difficult of circumstances."

"The only reason that we used the tactic is because we viewed the cap-and-trade bill as an existential threat to Oregon in general and Eastern Oregon in particular," Bentz said. "Because of the fact that energy is so incredibly important to our lives and to cede control of the price of energy to California — that won't work."

Meanwhile, issues of the overall climate and workplace culture in the Capitol remain in the background.

Next week, the Senate is expected to hold a hearing over remarks Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, has made, including saying that Oregon State Police ought to be "bachelors" and "heavily armed" should they be sent to bring him back to the Senate to vote.

Farm: Oregon lawmakers expand Farm-to-School Program

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\$10.35 million from the state general fund through 2021, bringing the total to nearly \$15 million.

"We've been doing this for almost eight years now," Sherman said. "It's been a great program. It continues to grow."

Sherman said the program served 131 school districts in 2018, accounting for 90% of all school lunches in the state.

With increased funding, HB 2579 will expand the Farm-to-School Program to federally funded early child care and summer food service centers, such as Head Start. Most of the money, \$11 million, will go toward grants for schools to purchase Oregon-grown food.

Some \$2.5 million is set aside for farm and garden-based education grants. Oregon has 758 school gardens across the state, Sherman said.

HB 2579 allocates \$500,000 to the Oregon Department of Agriculture to help farmers and ranchers with Farm-to-School market access. The rest of the money is for program evaluation, technical assistance and administrative costs.

Megan Kemple, director of the Oregon Farm-to-School and School Garden Network, said Oregon's Farm-to-School Program is a "win-win-win," not only supporting kids and communities, but connecting farmers with new markets for their products.

"There are a lot of producers that really appreciate the schools as a market because they are reliable," Kemple said. "It has allowed them to basically stabilize their businesses."

For example, Pollock & Sons, a watermelon farm in Hermiston, sold \$3,842 worth of late-season fruit to schools during a time when grocery sales typically fall

off at the end of summer. Port Orford Sustainable Seafood was also able to sell surplus fish to Rogue Valley Farm-to-School.

Kemple said Oregon's Farm-to-School Program is a model for the country.

"At a time when the state is politically divided, bipartisan efforts like this bring Republicans and Democrats together and bridge the urban-rural divide," Kemple said.

State Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, was a chief sponsor of the bill. He said he is excited to see the Farm-to-School Program expand.

"We should always be using tax dollars to buy local," Clem said in a statement. "It never made sense to me to buy apples from anywhere else than right here in Oregon. This program connects our schools and children to our most important industry: agriculture. It's Oregon farmers feeding Oregon's children."

Grant: Pendleton City Council takes second shot at \$25 million

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trict to the intersection of Southwest Nye Avenue and Tutuilla Road.

This is the second time the city has applied for the BUILD grant after coming up short last year.

Laura Slater, an ODOT project manager, explained to the council that their last application was still for \$25 million but more expensive.

The Interchange Area Management Plan, the city's roadmap for the project, calls for changes to Tutuilla Road and Southwest Hailey Avenue.

Slater said ODOT updated their traffic volume and cost estimates and realized they would need to add lanes to the northern improvements.

Combined with the increased costs of construction and right-of-way purchase, ODOT realized that the northside improvements would eat up most of the grant and match's budget.

The projects south of the interstate would cost another \$20 million, and neither the city nor the state has the money to complete those phases.

Councilor Dale Primmer asked how the project would affect nearby property owners.

The latest proposal would move the signaled intersec-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A motorist takes the off-ramp from Interstate 84 on Tuesday afternoon at exit 209.

tion west and realign Southwest 20th Street and Exit 209, meaning the roads would run where several houses and businesses are now.

ODOT area manager Ken Patterson said the department would meet with property owners and tenants one-on-one to discuss their options and connect them with a relocation program.

The city has some reasons for optimism in its second attempt.

One of the projects the city lost out to last year belonged to the Port of Morrow, which secured the BUILD grant on its second try.

Additionally, ODOT told the city that the Exit 209 project had just missed the cut compared to other projects in Oregon.

Councilor McKennon McDonald asked the ODOT officials what would happen if the city's grant application failed again.

Slater said ODOT would continue to design the project up to 50% before shelving it until a source of funding was identified.

If the grant is successful, Slater said ODOT expected to acquire all right-of-way properties by 2022 and complete construction in 2025.

After the councilors exhausted their questions, there wasn't much discussion before the council unanimously approved the \$2 million match.

The grant application is due by the end of the month and a decision on the BUILD grant is expected in the fall.

Super: Aaron Duff hired as next Milton-Freewater superintendent

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The unanimous decision at a special board meeting came after President Duane Geyer initially told the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* that the district would likely hire an interim superintendent for the upcoming school year.

"That speaks not only of myself, but to the board's awareness of the difference between the two options," Duff said. Receiving the job's full title, rather than being on an interim basis, allows Duff to "hit the ground running," he said.

As he transitions into his new role, Duff outlined his goals for the district in the coming years, such as expanding college-level course opportunities for students, a young teacher mentorship program and maintaining the recently upgraded facilities.

As for the man he's replacing, Clark's prized accomplishment in the district came in 2016 with the passing of a \$12.5 million bond that, along with \$19 million in state and private grants, helped open Gib Olinger Elementary School.

The K-3 school, which opened this past fall, was aided by Duff's coordination of finances and design. Duff also oversaw building upgrades at other facilities in the district thanks to the 2016 bond.

Outgoing superintendent Clark additionally highlighted increasing

diversity of the district's teachers as a success of his time at MFUSD. According to the 2018 Oregon Educator Equity Report, 16% of the district's faculty are considered "racially/ethnically diverse," which is up from 10% in 2013-14.

With over half of the district's students identifying as Hispanic or Latino, Duff wants to continue that progress.

"I think that the momentum has already moved and is something for us to build

"I LOVE MILTON-FREEWATER. I WANT TO BE A PART OF THE COMMUNITY FOR THE YEARS TO COME."

— Aaron Duff, new Milton-Freewater superintendent

on," he said. "I think having diverse teachers from age, race, men or women, and even experience is all for the better."

Duff's time at MFUSD began in 2004 as an agriculture and technology teacher for McLoughlin High School until becoming principal at Freewater Elementary School in 2012. Duff was then hired to his position of business and operations director in 2017.

All in all, Duff has spent roughly 14 years in the district. He says that experience has allowed him to already know the community and feel a part of it.

Clark, who had spent 28 years of his professional life

in Washington before coming to MFUSD, will return to the state to become interim superintendent for the Sequim School District.

While Clark entered the superintendent position from the outside, he sees Duff's experience within the district as both a blessing and a curse.

"The biggest challenge for him is going to be creating different relationships," Clark said. "They only knew me as the superintendent."

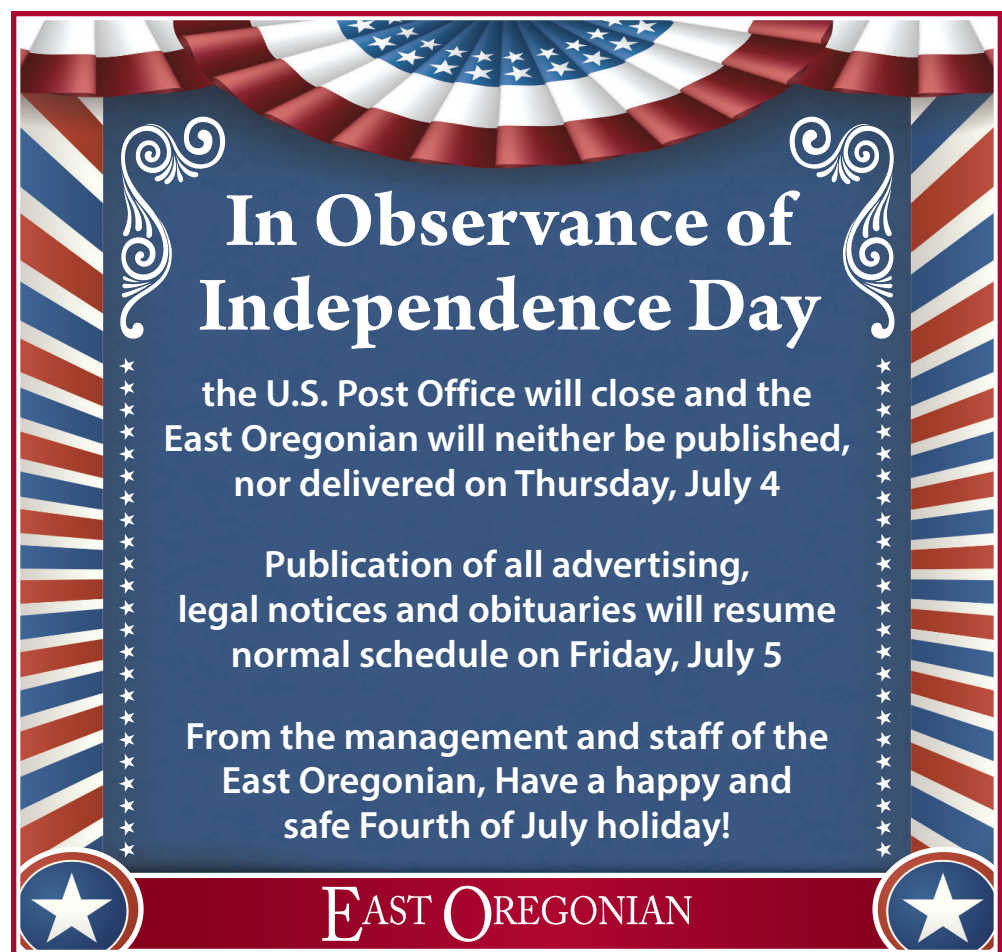
Clark said there's some faculty in the district that Duff actually taught during his first years in the district. Though he added he has no doubts in the new superintendent's ability to forge those new relationships.

Duff pointed to the collaborative atmosphere of the region's schools as a large reason for him staying within the district and said he's already getting phone calls from people wanting to help him.

"There is no better feeling than a peer reaching out to offer help and knowing they mean it," he said.

Though he climbed the ranks from teacher to administrator to now the district's chief position much quicker than he could have anticipated, Duff isn't looking to use his new role as a launching pad out of the region.

"I love Milton-Freewater," he said. "I want to be a part of the community for the years to come."



In Observance of Independence Day

the U.S. Post Office will close and the East Oregonian will neither be published, nor delivered on Thursday, July 4

Publication of all advertising, legal notices and obituaries will resume normal schedule on Friday, July 5

From the management and staff of the East Oregonian, Have a happy and safe Fourth of July holiday!

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