

# Union County couple sues surgeon, hospital

\$26M lawsuit filed in Baker County Circuit Court

By CHRIS COLLINS  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A Union County couple has filed a \$26 million lawsuit against former Baker City surgeon Dr. Eric Sandefur, and St. Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City.



Sandefur

Mark and Lynne Brown filed the lawsuit on Feb. 11 in Baker County Circuit Court. They are demanding a jury trial. The Browns allege that Mark Brown suffered a lifetime disability — the loss of mobility in his right leg — because of the defendants' negligence.

Sandefur performed a total knee replacement of Mark Brown's right leg on Oct. 16, 2018, at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City, the complaint states.

Mark Brown is asking for economic damages of up to \$10 million for complications that he alleges resulted after Sandefur performed the surgery.

Mark Brown claims that as a result of an infection that developed and continued to worsen over the course of his recovery, and which he alleges Sandefur was negligent in treating, Brown's right leg has been



St. Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City/Contributed Photo

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left immobile.

Because of his immobility, according to the complaint, Mark Brown is permanently disabled and can no longer work as a certified diesel and heavy equipment mechanic.

The lawsuit claims that Mark Brown expects to "incur economic damages in the form of past and future medical care and expenses as well as medical devices and implants, including prosthetics; past and future lost wages and impaired earnings; and past and future substitute domestic services."

Mark Brown also is seeking noneconomic damages of up to \$12 million to be determined at trial. According to the complaint, Brown

has experienced "severe pain, suffering, disability, anxiety, emotional distress, scarring, multiple hospitalizations, multiple surgical interventions, disfigurement, loss of self-esteem and permanent limitation on motion, together with interference of all aspects of his daily life."

The Browns' complaint also includes a second claim for relief against Saint Alphonsus Medical Center, alleging the hospital was negligent in credentialing and granting privileges for Sandefur to practice at the hospital.

The lawsuit alleges Saint Alphonsus should have known that prior to Sandefur's treatment of Mark Brown, Sandefur "had a history of

surgical outcomes that resulted in the development of infections."

The lawsuit claims the hospital should have performed "reasonable credentialing and ongoing peer review" of Sandefur to ensure the safety of its patients.

(A \$5.2 million lawsuit filed Sept. 8, 2020, in Baker County Circuit Court accuses Sandefur, Veronica Crowder, a physician assistant who worked with Sandefur, and Saint Alphonsus Medical Center of negligence in connection with treating a fracture to 6-year-old Avery Martin's right arm after she was injured on May 5, 2018.)

As part of the Browns' lawsuit, Lynne Brown also is seeking \$2 million for what she claims is the loss

of her husband's "society, companionship, consortium, services and support" as a result of the defendants' negligence and violations.

In a fourth claim for relief, Lynne Brown seeks an additional \$2 million in noneconomic damages. She alleges that as a result of Mark Brown's injuries caused by the defendants' negligence and violations, she has suffered "severe emotional distress and anxiety with depression."

The Browns are represented by Brian C. Dretke of the Dretke Law Firm of Bend.

Sandefur is represented by Connie Elkins McKelvey, of Lindsay Hart LLP, a Portland law firm. McKelvey did not respond to a voicemail message and an email seeking comment on the lawsuit.

Saint Alphonsus Health System declined to comment.

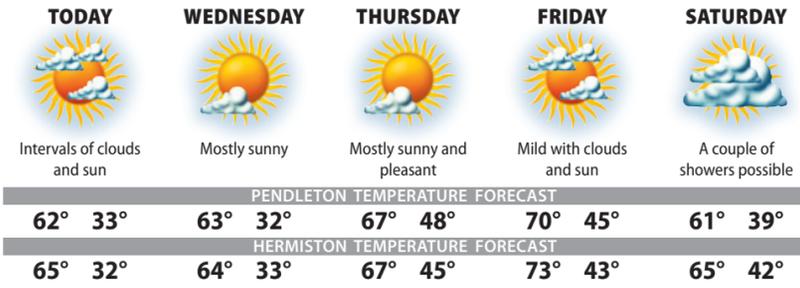
"Saint Alphonsus cannot comment on pending litigation," Mark Snider, Saint Alphonsus Health System spokesman, stated in an email to the Baker City Herald.

In a letter to his patients dated Dec. 21, 2020, Sandefur announced that "after 23 years of dedicated service with Saint Alphonsus, I have decided to explore new opportunities in health care."

The letter stated that Sandefur's last day of seeing patients would be Dec. 31, 2020.

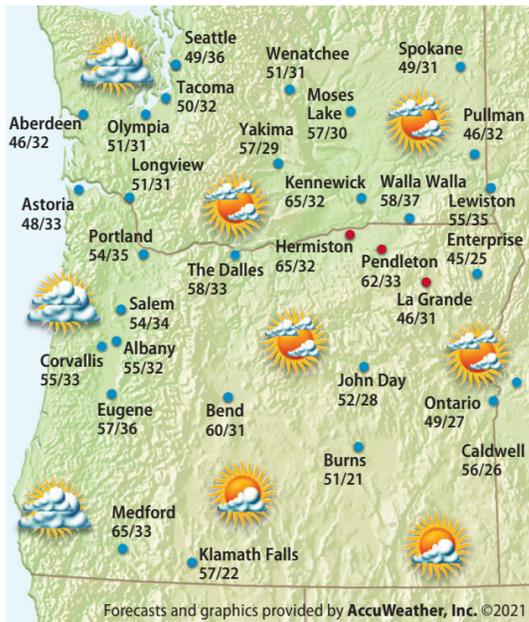
In closing, he wrote: "I truly appreciate the trust you have placed in me to partner in your care and wish you the very best in health going forward."

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



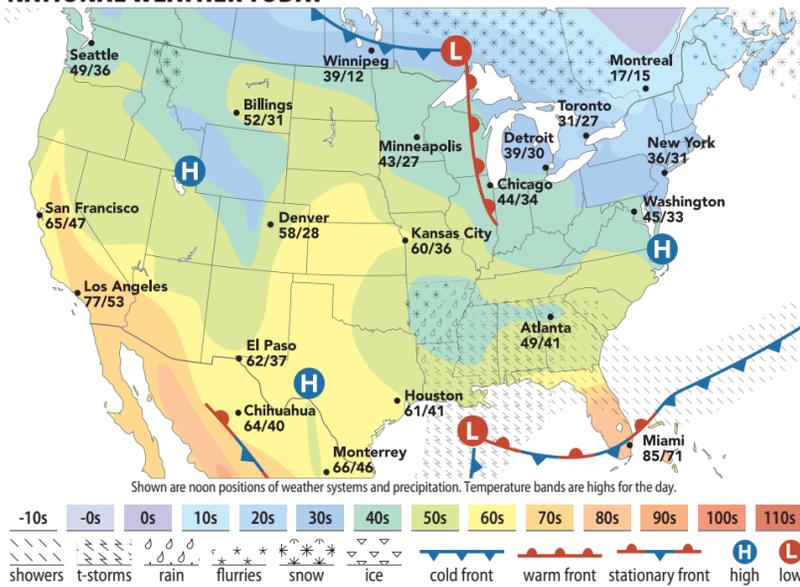
## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	62°	37°	
Normals	51°	32°	
Records	74° (1925)	1° (1993)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.03"		
Year to date	3.02"		
Last year to date	4.06"		
Normal year to date	2.54"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	64°	28°	
Normals	53°	31°	
Records	69° (1959)	10° (1993)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.04"		
Year to date	1.08"		
Last year to date	0.36"		
Normal year to date	2.28"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Wed.		
Boardman	WSW 7-14	NE 4-8	
Pendleton	W 6-12	E 4-8	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	6:32 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	5:43 p.m.		
Moonrise today	10:14 p.m.		
Moonset today	8:30 a.m.		
Last New First Full			
Mar 5	Mar 13	Mar 21	Mar 28

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

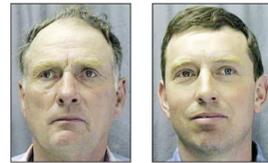
Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 91° in Titusville, Fla. Low -24° in Langdon, N.D.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Another lawsuit challenges Hammonds' grazing permit

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press



Dwight Hammond

Steven Hammond

SALEM — Environmentalists have asked a federal judge to again cancel the grazing permit for Oregon's Hammond family, claiming its restoration violated administrative, environmental and land management laws.

In January, the U.S. Interior Department reauthorized the Hammonds to graze cattle on four public land allotments totaling 26,400 acres, partly due to the family's historic use and proximity to the federal property.

Steven Hammond, who operates the ranch, and his father, Dwight, originally lost permission to graze the allotments near Diamond in 2014 when the government refused to renew their permit after they were criminally charged with setting fires to rangelands.

The Hammonds were convicted and completed their initial prison terms, then ordered back behind bars after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled they had to serve five-year mandatory minimum sentences for arson.

Their return to prison in early 2016 sparked protests that culminated in a month-long stand-off with federal agents at the Malheur National Wildlife that attracted national attention.

The ranchers were released early in 2018 after receiving a full pardon from former President Donald Trump, which prompted the Interior Department to renew the ranchers' grazing permit the following year due to "changed circumstances."

However, environmental groups convinced a federal judge to reverse that decision in 2019 because the grazing permit was renewed contrary to regulations.

The Interior Department then opened up the grazing allotments to applications from other ranchers, but ultimately decided to issue a new permit to the Hammond family earlier this year.

The Western Water-

sheds Project, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Wildearth Guardians and Center for Biological Diversity have now filed another lawsuit seeking to rescind the grazing permit's most recent approval.

The environmental plaintiffs argue the federal government's decision involved "rushed, opaque, and highly unusual public processes" that were "tainted by political influence and are not the product of reasoned, lawful decision-making," the complaint said.

According to the complaint, the federal government approved the grazing permit "without opportunities for public participation required by law" and wrongly determined the Hammonds were more qualified than other applicants.

The decision also didn't comply with land use protections for the sage grouse and with a statute aimed at conserving the "long term ecological integrity" of Steens Mountain in Eastern Oregon, the complaint said.

Alan Schroeder, attorney for the Hammonds, referred questions about the lawsuit to Steven Hammond, who wasn't available for comment.

## IN BRIEF

### U.S. Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader opposes Biden's COVID-19 relief package

WASHINGTON — U.S. Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader early on Saturday, Feb. 27, was the only Democratic member of Oregon's congressional delegation to vote against President Joe Biden's new pandemic relief bill.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved Biden's nearly \$2 trillion relief package, Schrader being one of only two Democrats to oppose the bill; the second Democrat was Rep. Jared Golden of Maine.

No Republicans voted in favor of the bill. That includes the newest member of Oregon's

congressional delegation — Republican Rep. Cliff Bentz.

The new relief package includes \$1,400 for most Americans, as well as extra aid to schools and businesses and extended unemployment benefits. The Democrats hope to have the relief bill approved by mid-March.

In December 2020, Schrader also voted against a bill that would have increased stimulus checks from \$600 per person to \$2,000.

—EO Media Group



Bentz

Schrader

# EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211  
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:



East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.

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For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

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\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

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