

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## Residents rally to bring kids to school

More than two dozen attend gathering at Hermiston High School

By **BRYCE DOLE**  
*East Oregonian*

HERMISTON — Garrett Robinson stood with his brother and friend beside the fields bordering Hermiston High School, each holding signs calling for an end to a monotonous year with one message in common

— five full days.

The three boys were part of a gathering of more than two dozen people who gathered for a rally at the high school on Saturday, March 13, calling for changes in state coronavirus guidelines that are preventing students from fully returning to in-person classes.

“We’re not learning as much. We’re going to be pretty much behind next year,” said Robinson, who starts school in person at Armand Larive Middle School on

Monday, March 22.

Robinson enjoys school. He likes science, spending time with teachers, having fun with friends and “becoming smarter so you don’t fail when you get older.” But finding help during online-school has been challenging, and he misses sports and his friends.

“We’ve been doing the same thing over and over,” Grant Olsen, a student at Hermiston High School, said. “Nothing’s different. We wake up, do the same thing over and over.

Very little sports. Very little friends. Nothing really exciting.”

State rules require school children and employees to stay 6 feet apart while in a school. That means a classroom can only have one student for every 36 square feet, or 10 to 12 students at a time, roughly half the size of a normal classroom.

Shane Robinson, Garrett’s father who helped organize the rally, said he’s concerned those rules will keep students from the classrooms through the coming months.

“If that’s going to carry through to the fall, they’re not going to see a full day of school on a consistent basis,” he said. “You can’t do it. Not with the spacing we have. Unless you’re going to magically rebuild schools overnight, it just isn’t going to happen.”

The rally took place a day after a top public health official announced in a press conference on Friday, March 12, that the state was

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**COVID-19**

## New data reveals disparity

Umatilla County’s Hispanic population three times more likely to test positive for COVID-19 in 2020

By **BRYCE DOLE**  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — New data released by the Umatilla County Public Health Department shows what was long understood but had yet to be disclosed — Hispanic residents have been disproportionately infected with COVID-19 in the county.

Residents reporting Hispanic ethnicity accounted for 41% of Umatilla County’s total COVID-19 cases in 2020, compared with 34% from non-Hispanic residents and 25% from residents whose ethnicity was unknown, according to a report released by the health department this week.

In addition, the county’s Hispanic population tested positive at a rate approximately three times higher than non-Hispanic residents in 2020, the data shows.

“We failed them,” said Jose Garcia, chair of the Hispanic Advisory Committee in Hermiston. “We failed some communities. Because for every death that happened in Umatilla County, there was a family involved.”

Hispanic or Latino people make up nearly 28% of Umatilla County’s population, according to 2019 U.S. Census data.

“I did anticipate that, just from everything I’d seen so far,” Halley Maloy, the county’s epidemiologist, said of the new data showing the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on the Hispanic community.

The report, which Maloy assembled over the last several months, details a variety of trends and data points related to the pandemic, from hospitalizations to reported deaths

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# Fuzzy math, absent maps

The cloudy future of Oregon politics east of the Cascades was unveiled to the public last week

By **GARY A. WARNER**  
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

**S**ALEM — The fuzzy future of Oregon politics east of the Cascades went public last week — no diagrams, charts, data — really nothing tangible at all to show how new legislative and congressional districts will be drawn.

“We don’t have any maps,” said Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, chair of the House Redistricting Committee. “We don’t have any numbers from the census.”

Salinas and her Senate counterpart, Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Milwaukie, said they were making a good faith effort to hold the legally required 10 public hearings on new political maps.

Maps that don’t exist — at least, not yet.

The hearings are collateral damage from the constitutional car crash headed to the Oregon Supreme Court.

The once-a-decade process of rebalancing populations in legislative and congressional districts is a smolderingly hot political wreck. Any fix isn’t expected earlier than autumn.

**These are not normal times**

Like so many things over the past year, COVID-19 is the main problem.

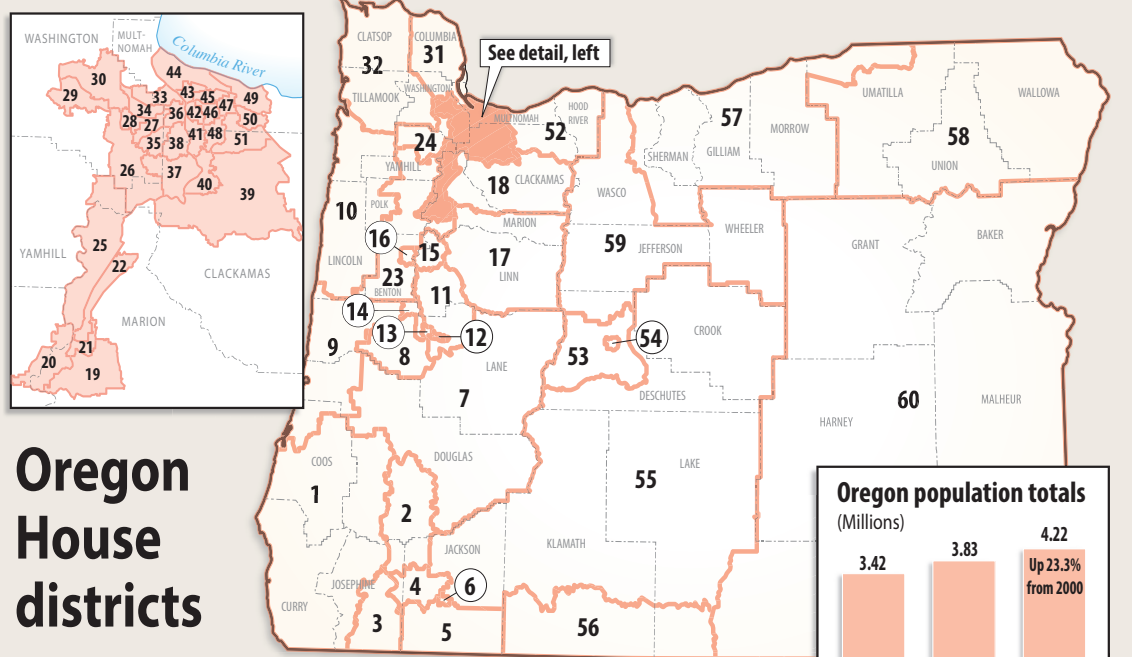
In normal times, the U.S. Census counts people every decade, in years that end in zero.

The Oregon Legislature gets

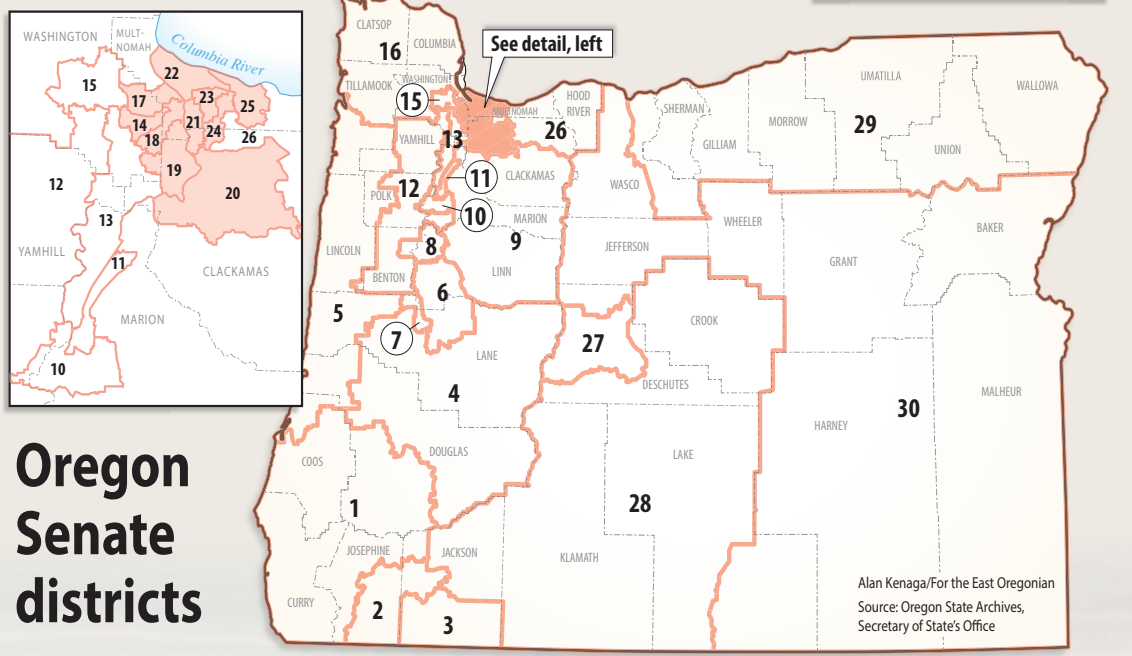
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Courtney Fagan Kotek Murdock Nash Salinas Taylor



**Oregon House districts**



**Oregon Senate districts**



A checkerboard of green and gold fields lines the countryside east of Pendleton as a haze hangs over the town on Jan. 15, 2021. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File