

Redistricting: ‘Oregonians expect their district to be fairly drawn’

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the state of Oregon in a way that’s fair and accurate. We have full faith in the legislative redistricting committees to lead this work.”

The court said lawmakers can adopt a plan in a special session, rather than the 2021 regular session, which is scheduled to end June 28. If lawmakers do not meet the new deadline of Sept. 27, the court said Fagan will have until Oct. 18 to come up with her own plan.

The court also set timelines for legal challenges to either plan. It said a plan must be final by Feb. 1 or Feb. 8, depending on whether lawmakers or the secretary of state draws up a plan.

The timelines do not change the filing deadline for the 2022 primary or the actual date of the election.

Fagan said in a statement afterward:

“Our agency’s core objectives were to prevent moving the 2022 election dates and to preserve robust public input by starting the process with available population data. We appreciate that the Oregon Supreme Court thoughtfully adopted both of our objectives. Representation matters and that is what redistricting is all about. That is why we will continue to engage Oregonians in the Legislature’s public hearings from all corners of the state. ...



Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, left, and Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, filed a petition on March 10, 2021, against Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, a fellow Democrat. The petition aims to give the Oregon Legislative Assembly more time this year to redraw the state’s legislative districts.

Sam Stites/Capital Bureau

Every Oregonian has a stake in this process, which is why we must continue to work together to ensure all Oregonians have the fair, equitable representation they deserve.”

Republicans comment

Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod of Lyons said he was satisfied that the court left the initial stage of redistricting to the Legislature.

“Oregonians expect their district to be fairly drawn,” he said in a statement. “The most important principles for Republicans are ‘One-Person-One-Vote’ and upholding the Voting Rights Act. Gerrymandering is unacceptable and by keeping this process in the Legislature, we have a chance to come to a

bipartisan agreement to draw fair lines.”

House Republican Leader Christine Drahan of Canby restated her support for an independent commission to redraw both legislative and congressional district lines. A proposed initiative failed to qualify for the 2020 general election ballot, although its advocates went to federal

court in an attempt to reduce the signature requirements because of the coronavirus pandemic. A measure to create such a commission is pending, but even if lawmakers referred it to voters, it would not come to a statewide election until 2022.

“Oregon needs to commit to a nonpartisan and transparent redistricting process,”

Drahan said. “Shockingly, we are the only state on the West Coast that does not currently have an independent redistricting commission. In fact, we’re behind 26 other states in the country that have or are moving to an independent system this year. Oregonians deserve better, and they overwhelmingly support independent redistricting.”

Congress excluded

The court’s decision does not apply directly to congressional redistricting. Although the court is the final arbiter of such a plan if lawmakers do not come up with one — the court appoints a special panel under a law passed in 2013 — the rules governing congressional redistricting are in state law and not the Oregon Constitution.

Oregon expects to gain a sixth U.S. House seat as a result of the 2020 Census.

Lawmakers approved both legislative and congressional redistricting plans in 2011, and neither was challenged in court. For legislative redistricting, it was the first time since 1911 that lawmakers completed the task themselves without intervention by the secretary of state or the court. For congressional redistricting, it was the first time since 1981, when Oregon gained a fifth U.S. House seat after the 1980 Census.

Schools: Oregon stricter than Washington

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insurmountable problem.

“Basically, our kids can go off campus for lunch,” Quaresma said. “And then we use our gymnasium for kids who stay.”

The Milton-Freewater School District will join Athena-Weston in offering full-time, in-person learning on Monday, April 12.

This district hasn’t completed its transition to a full a.m./p.m. hybrid schedule yet, but it will make the jump due to the new 3-foot rule.

Superintendent Aaron Duff said while all K-12 students have returned already to some in-classroom learning, students in grades 6-12 have been limited to a single class a day.

A switch to an a.m./p.m. schedule was planned for these students on April 5, but the district decided to hold off and plan for a full return instead.

Brown issued stricter rules for reopening schools than her Washington counterpart, Gov. Jay Inslee, did at the start of the school year. While Inslee’s restrictions were guidelines, Brown’s were mandates.



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Ferndale Elementary School in Milton-Freewater welcomed full-time students in class on Monday, April 12, 2021. Here, two people approach the building entrance on Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

So Washington schools in the area were able to start transitioning to hybrid schedules, while area Oregon schools could not. Duff expressed frustration at this late last year.

Now, however, Duff finds his district ready to transition about two weeks before most districts in Walla Walla County.

“I think we would be (making the change) at the same time if Washington’s

spring break was different,” Duff said.

Washington schools are in spring break this week, and districts are waiting until after the week off to start preparations. Oregon schools, however, had their spring break in March.

“I think that’s the reason why our timeline is different,” Duff said.

The newest leap the schools are taking is just the continuation of prog-

ress that has been made since the start of the school year.

“We’ve been moving toward this,” Duff said. “We started this process in September. We have taken small steps. ... And, we have worked with staff in those steps.”

Duff and Quaresma said the focus now has to be on assisting students to finish as strongly as possible after a difficult year.

Migrane: ‘I don’t want to be around people’

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to him in their Pendleton home. She flashed him an encouraging smile.

It’s been an exasperating journey for the couple. The medical odyssey affects not only Dave, but also Danielle and their children Hadlee, 13, and Kyler, 5. Danielle, who is assistant manager at D&B Supply and teaches in the veterinary assistant program at Blue Mountain Community College, often must dash away from work to ferry her kids and husband to school, day care and doctor’s appointments. It isn’t safe for Dave to drive because of periodic blackouts.

The family faces frustrating financial challenges as well. Dave hasn’t worked since that day 13 months ago. Danielle has her jobs, but the family struggled to stay ahead

of the stream of medical bills. Around the first of the year, when the insurance deductible of \$10,000 reset to zero, Danielle went to the pharmacy to pick up a migraine medication and was shocked to learn the drug cost more than \$900 for 30 pills.

She instructed the pharmacy clerk to put the pills back on the shelf. Ironically, after stopping the medication, Dave felt better and side effects, such as brain fog, lessened somewhat.

A Go Fund Me account set up by Danielle’s co-worker and friend Britany Cline brings in enough funds to make headway on the bills. But the charges keep coming. Just the other day, a \$2,200 bill from St. Anthony Hospital arrived. The Go Fund Me account, titled “Medical Expenses for the Wallace Family,” has so far raised \$4,200.

The next step is a consultation with a neurologist at Oregon Health & Science University. Dave will present the doctor with a stack of test results and reports. He hopes for a breakthrough.

In the face of the uncertainty and upheaval, Dave and Danielle try to be strong for each other.

“It’s just been so hard,” Dave said, looking at Danielle. “She doesn’t know this, but I break down.”

Danielle says she saves her times of angst for when she’s away from home. The children likely have their own moments of distress.

Cline worries about Danielle as much as Dave. “She always has a bright smile, kind words, a love for animals and livestock and a heart made of pure gold,” she wrote in a Facebook post. “Running into Danielle, you’d never know the troubles she faces and

you’d never know she is in one of the darkest chapters of her life. Her resilience is amazing, but everyone has a breaking point.”

Both Danielle and Dave crave the normalcy of the old days. Danielle misses laughing and having fun as a family. Dave dreams of going to work, metal detecting with his children, tending to his coin collection, fishing and so many other things that he once took for granted.

These days, he said, his hobby is searching the internet as Pandora plays low in the background, looking for information that will lead to a diagnosis. He misses the days when he felt at ease around lots of people. These days he feels more comfortable staying home.

“Now I don’t even like going to the store,” Dave said. “I don’t want to be around people.”



Claire Withycombe/Oregon Capital Bureau, File

State Sen. Bill Hansell, far left, speaks on the Oregon Senate floor on June 29, 2019. Hansell was one of six Senate Republicans who showed up to the floor on March 25, 2021, as the chamber took up a proposal to ban firearms in state buildings and lay the foundation for other bans.

Hansell:

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they’re trying to get a recall for me,” he said. “But it’s not going to stop me from doing what I believe is the right thing for me to do in order to serve the people that have elected me to the office I hold.”

Democrats hold 18 seats in the Senate, with a required quorum of 20 members. Hansell said he is unwilling to consistently deny a quorum on bills he doesn’t agree with.

“For us to deny a quorum, we’re going to have to come back at some point,” he said. “And the bill will still be there. It didn’t make any sense to me to deny a quorum over this one bill this early in the session.”

By showing up, he felt that he was upholding essential parts of the democratic process.

“The people have a chance to vote on it,” he said, adding that being on the floor allowed him to go on the record challenging the bill. “If they don’t like what the Legislature has done — and I don’t, I’m not supporting the bill, I voted no and I’ll vote no every time — they have a chance to raise the signatures and do it.”

Hansell isn’t the only Republican facing recall threats from showing up on March 25. Senate Minority Leader Fred Girod, who has held the Senate seat since 2008, is facing similar efforts, though recall petitions against state legislators and Gov. Kate Brown in the past few years have fallen short.

Hansell said that Girod facing a recall effort seems like “friendly fire” and

described it as “shortsighted.”

“You want to take out somebody that votes the way you want 99% of the time but on one bill?” he said, describing Girod as a “great leader.”

Hansell added the focus of the opposition should be placed on the bill writers and promoters, rather than Republicans who oppose it.

“The battle is not over yet,” he said. “For us to recall somebody because they chose to stay and fight rather than run and hide on one bill out of the whole legislative process is very shortsighted. It makes no sense whatsoever to me.”

In addition, Hansell said that, with the Legislature moving ahead to make plans and redraw 2020 political districts, it is especially important that Republicans show up. The Oregon Supreme Court on Friday, April 9, ruled unanimously that the Oregon Legislature would have the right to redraw boundaries for the state’s 90 House and Senate seats.

“If we don’t show up and that committee continues to meet, lines are going to be drawn without any input from people from” places like rural Oregon, he said. “There is just too much at stake to not show up.”

Hansell described the walkout tactic as a “valuable tool in the tool belt” to be used sparingly. He said if the tactic is abused, “you run the risk of being further in the minority” because moderate voters in both parties “don’t feel this is a tactic that should be done.”

“It’s more of your far right, if you will,” Hansell said of people who largely support walkouts. “I suspect if the Democrats were in the minority, it would be more of the far left.”