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CAPITAL INSURRECTION

Bentz: Investigation of Jan. 6 a constitutional duty

Freshman U.S. rep makes stop Monday, June 7, in Pendleton on swing through district

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Encompassing nearly 70,000 square miles, Oregon's 2nd Congressional District is not easy to traverse if a lawmaker wants to be thorough about meeting with constituents.

By the time he stopped in Pendleton to meet with local leaders on Monday, June 7, U.S. Rep. Cliff

Bentz, R-Ontario, had already visited Bend, Madras, Klamath Falls and Medford. Despite the disparate nature of each community, Bentz said the issues constituents wanted to talk about were often the same: climate, wildfires, drought, housing, homelessness, agriculture and infrastructure.

"I would say the issues are very alike," he said.

It was Bentz's first stop in Pendleton since he was elected to represent the 2nd District in 2020, emerging from a 11-way Republican primary to win the general election and fill the seat former Rep. Greg Walden held for more than two decades.

Bentz was thrown almost immediately into the fire when on Jan. 6, a group of rioters breached the U.S. Capitol as lawmakers were voting to certify President Joe Biden's victory. In May, Bentz was one of 35 House Republicans who joined Democrats in creating a bipartisan commission to investigate the attempted insurrection.

For Bentz, the commission was preferable to the alternatives. Under the legislation creating the commission, the body would be comprised of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans and require a majority to issue subpoenas. Bentz said the structure of the commission would allow Republicans to also scrutinize Speaker

Nancy Pelosi and Democrats and whether they played any role in some of the security lapses that day.

Bentz said the alternative was a select committee House Democrats assembled that would conduct an investigation in a more partisan manner.

But besides the partisan implications, Bentz said it also was his constitutional duty to support an investigation of what happened on Jan. 6.

"On the list, certainly not necessarily at the top, is the fact that each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution," he said. "And if you have people wandering through the Capitol screaming 'Hang

(former Vice President) Mike Pence' — which they were, you can look at it and see it — it's the kind of thing that we in Congress should be doing our best to prevent in the future."

The rioters breached the Capitol under the assumption, without evidence, that massive voter fraud had been perpetrated in key states to steal the victory away from former President Donald Trump.

Although Congress ultimately voted to certify the vote, Bentz was among a group of lawmakers who voted against the certification of votes in Pennsylvania.

Bentz said his vote for the Jan. 6

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Looking to boost workforce

Lawmakers assert that current supplemental unemployment benefits are driving a regional labor shortage

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
and BRYCE DOLE
EO Media Group

SALEM — Eastern Oregon lawmakers are calling for the state to end supplemental unemployment benefits to help out-of-work Oregonians endure the pandemic, saying the programs have spurred a workforce shortage that is hurting regional business economies.

Commissioners from 14 Eastern Oregon counties, as well as three state representatives and one senator, signed a letter and sent it Monday, June 7, to Gov. Kate Brown's office, asserting "unemployment recipients, especially those receiving additional federal unemployment benefits, are choosing to stay home rather than look for work." The letter stated the benefits are "creating a labor shortage that is impacting our most vulnerable communities and will not be sustainable long term."

"There's a disincentive to work," said Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, who signed the letter. "You get paid as much, or nearly as much, to not work as you do to work with the

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Beverage



Nash



Hansell



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File

Duane Thul, one leg of the trio of board members for Weston Cemetery Maintenance District No. 2, talks on May 14, 2021, about a large granite tombstone that overgrowth completely covered at the cemetery.

Historic treasure Weston Cemetery District a source of pride

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WESTON — It's hard for Zach Mayer to draw a line between where his board service on the Weston Cemetery District ends and family life begins.

Mayer, along with Duane Thul and Sallie McCullough, make up the elected, volunteer board in charge of keeping these 9 acres functioning well enough to house the dead and serve the living.

The job is not only an honor for Mayer, but a multi-pronged connection to his heritage, he said.

That line to the Weston Cemetery began with his great-great-grandfather, Alex "Bump" McCorkell.

When he retired from farming in 1946, McCorkell moved off the nearby mountain and became the first dedicated cemetery sexton for the unincorporated town.

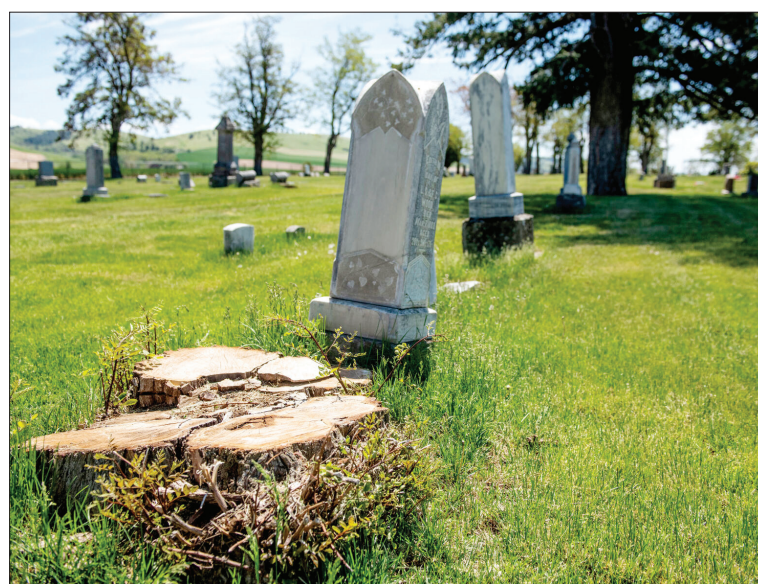
The title fails to portray the range of duties involved, from coordinating property care to managing legal and public records associated with burials, stocking supplies and resetting headstones.

Before McCorkell took the sexton position, according to local legends, families dug graves for their own in this spot atop a rolling hill just outside of town.

"Because people didn't have any money for funerals," recalled McCorkell's granddaughter, Amy McCorkell Mayer. "People would go at night and bury their babies."

Cemetery dates back to 1870s

Indeed, the earliest recorded burial at Weston Cemetery was of an infant in 1873, five years before Weston officially became a city, said area historian Sheldon Delph, also descended from a branch of the McCorkells.



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File

A stump on May 14, 2021, bears testimony to one of the dozens of failing locust trees that have been removed from the Weston Cemetery. Officials said the decision was painful but necessary for safety reasons.

The land for the original cemetery was donated from the homestead of Isham E. Saling, who left Walla Walla to settle in Weston and establish himself as a merchant

nine cemetery districts," the historian said. "Weston is Cemetery District No. 2."

Early on, numerous graves were marked with wooden memorials or

"ANYTIME HE WOULD BE DIGGING A NEW GRAVE AND FIND REMAINS, HE'D HAVE TO STOP AND FIND A NEW SPOT."

— Zach Mayer, Weston Cemetery District board member

around that time.

More land was added later, especially when the 1893 diphtheria and 1918 Spanish flu epidemics claimed numerous lives, including entire families, Delph said.

The cemetery became its own taxing district in 1950, meaning public money was available to pay McCorkell a wage and keep up with repairs and improvements.

"In Umatilla County, there are

not at all. Grass fires were known to decimate the area, burning away homemade crosses and other markers.

The cemetery McCorkell first took on 75 years ago was more wild space than not. Weeds were free range and the hand-dug graves nearly so, Zach Mayer said.

"Anytime he would be digging

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SENATE BILL 513

Civics already offered at local schools

Bill requires a half credit of high school civics

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

SALEM — Every high schooler in Oregon starting in 2026 will need to take at least one class in civics before graduating. But thanks to requirements at the local level, little will change for the two largest school districts in Eastern Oregon.

Gov. Kate Brown on June 3 signed Senate Bill 513, a law that adds a half-credit of civics education to the list of the state's graduation requirements. The bill passed with strong bipartisan support, including every member of Northeast Oregon's legislative delegation.

"It is a bill that begins the process of holding our schools accountable for teaching the next generation of Oregonians how to operate the most complex, complicated and often confounding form of self-governance in human history," state Rep. Paul Evans, D-Monmouth, said, according to the Oregon Capital Bureau. "This is a call to arms for all good people to come to the aid of our Union."

The bill may result in some new offerings at high schools around the state, but many districts, including those in Pendleton and Hermiston, already required it.

State law mandates all high schoolers obtain 24 credits to graduate, but only lists three credits of math, four credits of English and, now, a half-credit of civics as requirements. The rest of the state's graduation requirements are handled by the Oregon State Board of Education, which maintains requirements for other subjects like health, physical education and electives.

The board gives school districts leeway in how students obtain three credits of social sciences, meaning schools could require classes like economic or personal finance instead of civics.

But in the many years Brian Johnson has taught social studies at Pendleton High School, civics always has been a must-take course for students.

Following years of the state

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