

INSIDE EXPLORE UNION COUNTY'S HISTORY, IN GO!



Redistricting could change representation in E. Oregon

One proposal would force Sen. Hansell to move if he wanted to stay in District 29

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The lines, they are a-changin’.

On Friday, Sept. 3, the House and Senate Interim Committees on Redistricting released its first redistricting plans for the following decade. Over the next several months, legislators will be responsible for drawing lines

for the state’s congressional and legislative districts.

With Oregon gaining a sixth congressional district, Democrats and Republicans already have begun drawing battle lines on the geographic and partisan makeup of each district, with each party producing a map that favors their side.

While Umatilla and Morrow counties are unlikely to see their political representation change in Congress, the legislative lines could change significantly in Eastern Oregon. All three redistricting plans for the Oregon House would maintain the Pendleton-Hermiston split that was introduced in 2011, but District

57 and 58 likely are to change in different ways.

All of Northeastern Oregon’s legislative delegation — Greg Smith of House District 57, Bobby Levy of House District 58 and Bill Hansell of Senate District 19 — were concerned about gerrymandering in a state where Democrats have supermajority control in the statehouse.

Levy said the Portland area was overrepresented in the Legislature and encouraged local residents to speak at the public hearings with the redistricting committees in support of fair representation in the Legislature and Congress. The committees held their first

virtual hearing for Congressional District 2, which includes Eastern Oregon, on Wednesday, Sept. 8, but will hold another hearing Friday, Sept. 10, at 8 a.m.

Hansell is the only local legislator on one of the redistricting committees. He said the challenge of redistricting is not only in making the lines contiguous, accessible by transportation links and inclusive of communities of common interest but keeping all of them the same population size. In a region that’s been slow to grow, that means making Eastern Oregon districts larger in geographic size.

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Sheriff's role is not mask patrol

Belief that sheriff's offices enforce mask mandates a 'misnomer'

By ALEX WITTWER
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon sheriff's offices reaffirmed they would not enforce the mask mandates Gov. Kate Brown set in place. As well, a number of sheriffs across Eastern Oregon, including in Baker and Union counties, have addressed the matter in letters to the governor stating they will not be enforcing any mask mandates.

But the governor never asked them to do so.

The enforcement of mask mandates falls under the supervision of the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration, not local law enforcement, according to the governor's office.

"The mandates don't provide authority to me to do anything,"

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said in a previous interview with the East Oregonian.

There is one exception — the sheriffs said they would continue to handle issues of trespassing wherein a patron of a business refuses to wear a mask after being asked to by the business — but that is the ultimate extent to which the law enforcement agencies have said they would intervene.



Rowan

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ADVOCATE FOR THE SHOT

Rachelle Lasater of Athena leads vaccine efforts in northeast Umatilla County

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The protester accosted the people in Weston's community hall as they waited to get their COVID-19 vaccine on a recent afternoon in late August.

Patients spoke up and pushed back, eventually forcing him

outside to the street. A young patient looked nervously toward Rachelle Lasater, a registered nurse from Athena who was helping with immunizations that day. The woman was not mandated to get the shot, Lasater believes, but she was reluctant and had only recently changed her mind. Trepidatiously, she went through with her decision.

That moment has stuck in

Lasater's mind. She has mixed feelings about it. On one hand, she's glad the young woman decided to receive a potentially life saving vaccine. On the other hand, she feels bad that the woman made her decision — a personal decision, Lasater said — under the shroud of political division, and Lasater didn't want it to seem like she was forcing her.

"It was an uncomfortable situation," said Lasater, 44. "I think we handled it professionally. Patients still received the vaccine. It felt good to meet people's needs, but I also had my eyes opened to the other side — that people don't want it, and they don't want people to get it."

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Registered nurse and firefighter Rachelle Lasater administers a dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2021, at the East Umatilla County Ambulance Area Health District office in Athena.

Curtailling school activities could speed drop in COVID-19 cases

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Schools should cancel or curtail some extracurricular activities to help Oregon maintain what appears to be the beginning of a decline from record high numbers of COVID-19 infections, Gov. Kate Brown said Tuesday, Sept. 7.

Multiple forecasts over the past week showed a peak in the two-month surge of infections driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

Hospitals remain nearly full and case reports are still twelve times what they were in early July.

The fragile ebb in the worst of the crisis will be challenged by the flood of schoolchildren returning to class.

"It is with mixed emotions that we are welcoming our kids back to school at this time," said Brown during a Sept. 7 press call.

Brown was joined by health and education officials to announce additional, voluntary efforts to go along with the mandatory vaccination of school employees and mask mandates for students and staff.

The state will issue School Health Advisories on a regular basis. The first one, announced

Sept. 7, asks schools to cancel or curtail extracurricular activities through a least Oct. 1.

Safety protocols

Back-to-school events should be done online, if possible.

Schools should hold as much activity outdoors as possible, including school meals and physical education classes.

"The safety protocols put in place by your school not only make it safer for everyone, but they also help ensure that our kids actually get to stay in school," said Colt Gill, Oregon Education Department director.

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Arden Barnes/Klamath Falls Herald And News, File Oregon Gov. Kate Brown visits the Bly Fire Camp on June 28, 2021, on the southern edge of the Bootleg Fire in Klamath County.