

Redistricting:

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The end of the session

The redistricting maps passed largely on party lines, but earned some extra indignation from Republicans.

The heart of Republicans' ire was directed at Kotek. She had previously committed to appointing an equal number of Democrats and Republicans to the redistricting committee. But when the committee couldn't come to an agreement, she created new redistricting committees to pass the maps.

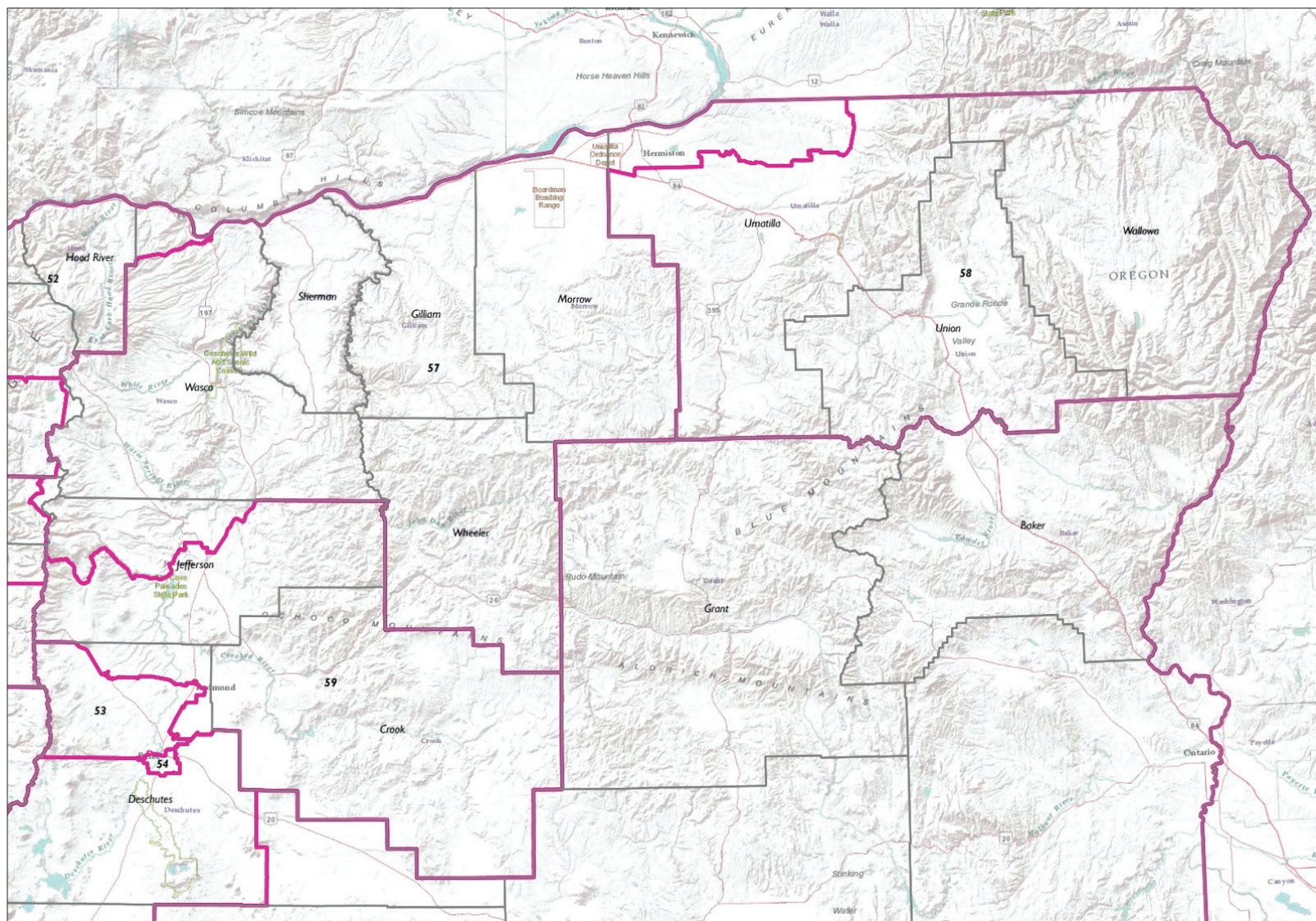
The move received swift condemnation from Republicans. Levy called it a "transparent display of anti-democratic behavior" in a statement, while Hansell said it was "disappointing" in an interview. While Republicans didn't deny Democrats a quorum to pass the maps, they did attempt to censure Kotek before the end of the session.

Smith, who was appointed to the new legislative committee, explained why he became a late addition to the redistricting committee.

"My understanding is I was appointed to that committee to bring experience, because this is the third time I've been through redistricting, and the fourth district I've served," he said. "I was able to bring a little bit different perspective than most of the members on the committee who had never been through redistricting."

It was explained how Republicans were stuck between a rock and a hard place. Another GOP walkout could result in fairer congressional maps once redistricting is put in the hands of the court system. But failing to pass legislative maps means Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, a Democrat, would redraw the lines in the state, potentially rendering a worse map for Republicans. Smith passed the legislative maps out of committee but voted against them on the floor of the House.

A veteran of three redistricting



Oregon redistricting website/Contributed Graphic

The new legislative maps for Eastern Oregon make a number of changes to House districts 57 and 58. Helix and Stanfield swapped districts while Milton-Freewater splits between both. District 57 also gained Wheeler County, a larger portion of Wasco County and the Warm Springs Reservation. Senate District 29 remains a combination of districts 57 and 58.

cycles, Smith said Democrats have been gaining power in redistricting since 2000, when a Democratic secretary of state drew the map. Smith said the trend is unlikely to change unless voters pass a referendum to put redistricting in the hands of an independent commission.

Redistricting creates new questions in Wheeler County

With Oregon's urban and suburban areas growing while much of its rural territory is flat or shrinking, many rural legislative districts grew

in area to ensure all districts were equal in population size.

District 57 followed that trend, but added Wheeler County in the process. Smith now represents a county that he also works with directly.

In his day job, Smith works on economic development projects across the region. One of Smith's many hats includes acting as the officer of the board for the Wheeler County Development Corp. In conjunction with Wheeler County, the organization operates a revolving loan fund for small businesses.

Smith is listed throughout the corporation's website as a contact person.

Smith said he has no plans to step down from his role with the corporation, adding that "there'd be no reason for me to give up the good work we do down and Wheeler County."

"It's no different than any other type of work I do," he said. "You have to be extraordinarily careful in following the rules and the laws that we have in the state of Oregon. And that's what we will do."

This isn't the first time Smith

has garnered scrutiny for potential conflicts between his personal business and his legislative work.

Willamette Week said Smith "may be the best compensated lawmaker in Salem," highlighting connections between his day job as an economic development specialist and the projects he approves as a legislator. The Malheur Enterprise investigated the public contracts he holds through his personal company, including his role as the director of the Malheur County Economic Development Department.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Attendees wander a line of vendors Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021, during the annual Morrow County Harvest Festival at the SAGE Center in Boardman.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Anthony Licea, 12, paints a pumpkin Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021, during the Morrow County Harvest Festival at the SAGE Center in Boardman.

Festival:

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Rietmann said he has been to all of the festivals, since they began. He goes to local craft bazaars, and this one is "very good," he said.

Gracie Krahn, Linn-Benton Community College sophomore and 2021 Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador, was among the people who had a booth at the festival. She visited Boardman on her tour of state fairs, summer camps and other events. Krahn, an Albany

resident, said she was having a good time.

"I love this event," she said. "I've been able to connect with little ones and others, all the way up to grandmas and grandpas. It's been an outstanding afternoon."

Linda Mackey, owner of The Natural Maximum of Washington, boasted being at Harvest Festival each year since it began. A Prosser, Washington, resident, she said she was glad to be outside in beautiful weather. Most years, she said, the weather has been windy and unpleasant.

Mackey was at the festival with products, such as hats, made from alpaca wool. She raises alpacas, sheers them, sends the fiber away to be processed and then she makes products with the wool. She knits, weaves, crochets and felts.

As Beck greeted attendees and met with vendors, she said the 2021 Morrow County Harvest Festival was a big success. And she said she expects next year will be even better, with more space for more vendors and additional attendees returning from COVID-19 quarantines.

Cases:

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The Round-Up required no proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 to enter the grounds. Had there been a requirement, Fiumara said some of the infection could have been avoided. He pointed to college football games in Oregon that have those requirements and have yet to see an outbreak.

There is no state rule that says organizers must require a proof of COVID-19 vaccination or negative test to hold an event.

Pendleton Round-Up General Manager Erika Patton did not return a call seeking comment prior to press time.

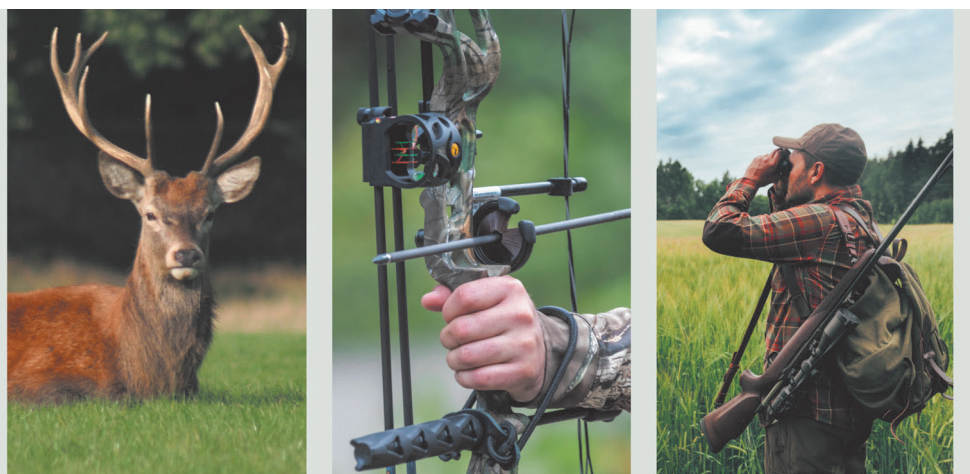
Cases stemming from the week-long rodeo have so far been reported in Oregon, Washington and Montana, as well as Umatilla, Jefferson, Morrow, Wallowa and Union counties, according to Mike Stensrud, an epidemiologist with Umatilla County Public Health. The vast majority of cases have been reported in Umatilla County — 166.

But the county still doesn't know if the outbreak

could be larger, as contact tracers have only been able to interview 81% of identified cases stemming from the Round-Up.

The county plans to disclose more data soon about where the cases occurred during Round-Up week to inform residents about their likelihood of exposure to the virus and to inform future event planning.

Umatilla County has reported 13,596 COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began, according to county health data. In all, 129 county residents who have contracted the virus have died.



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