

# Prayer vigil rebukes controversial books in Walla Walla schools

By EMRY DINMAN  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — Calling for the removal of books detractors say are political, sexually explicit and use excessive foul language, around 50 people met for a prayer vigil Tuesday, Jan. 18, outside the Walla Walla School District office just before the regular school board meeting, held virtually via Zoom.

Cathy Rasley and Sarah Herrera co-organized the vigil. Rasley has grandchildren in the public school district and co-owns Hot Mama's Espresso with her daughter and county Commissioner Jenny Mayberry. Herrera, an administrative assistant at Liberty Christian School, has two children in the public school district.

"It's because of what's going on in the school district with different books and the masks and just all sorts of stuff," Rasley said about the vigil in a Walla Walla Union-Bulletin interview. "It's just coming to a head. We're trying to pray for our schools and the students that go there."

Rasley and Herrera have published several videos on social media and spoken at numerous school board meetings criticizing decisions such as mask and vaccination requirements at the district.

Herrera said few topics they've raised have sparked as much interest as the four books they have asked to be removed from library shelves. The books are the graphic novel "Gender Queer: A Memoir," by Maia Kobabe, and the novels



Cathy Rasley speaks Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, outside the Walla Walla School District office as residents hold a prayer gathering before the regular school board meeting.

"The Bluest Eye," by Toni Morrison, "The Hate U Give," by Angie Thomas, and "All Boys Aren't Blue," by George Johnson. While "The Bluest Eye" was published in 1970, the remaining three books were published between 2017 and 2020.

Previous attempts to have the school district remove the books were unsuccessful, Rasley said in a video posted to social media.

"Gender Queer: A Memoir," has been the subject of nationwide controversy and was the first to draw Rasley's attention, she said, due to an illustrated but blurred scene that depicts oral sex between two teenage boys.

In a Dec. 2021 interview with NBC News, author Kobabe, who identifies as nonbinary, defended their book, saying while the book's graphic images may not be appropriate for elementary school-aged children, it contains frank conversations about sexuality and gender nonconformity.

"All Boys Aren't Blue" faced similar criticism from the prayer vigil's organizers. Rasley described a sexually explicit sentence about gay teens engaged in oral sex.

In an interview with Time, author Johnson argued by the time teen readers experience his book, they're likely well aware of sex, and that his novel contains themes

of sexual education about consent and sexual abuse.

"So they're leaving very, very important context out, intentionally of course, to try and say my book is pornographic," Johnson told Time in a November 2021 interview.

Morrison's novel "The Bluest Eye," deals with themes of incest and rape, which Rasley said was inappropriate for children. "The Hate U Give" contains "90 F-words and F the police," which is language inappropriate for teenagers, she said.

The prayer vigil in front of the district office was the latest in a series of protest actions taken by Herrera, Rasley and others. The

contested books, which have all been the subject of a wave of censorship across the country, came to the fore locally after the pair posted a video on social media claiming that "Gender Queer: A Memoir," had been removed from the high school library.

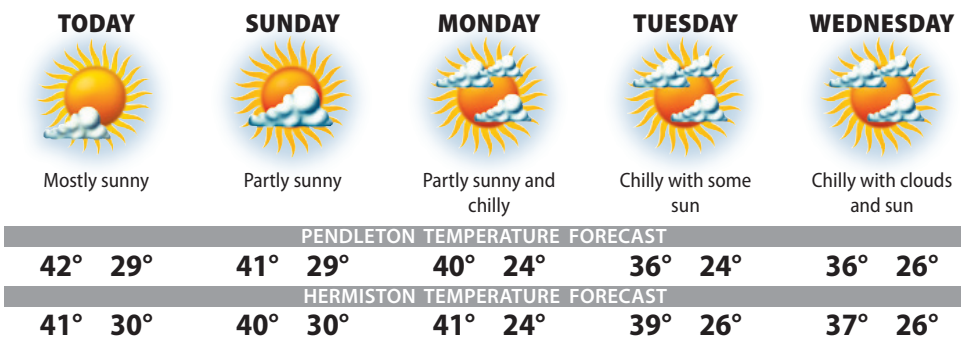
At the time, that book had not yet entered library circulation but since has, wrote Christy Krutulis, executive director of teaching and learning at the school district. All four books are available in district libraries, but none are required reading or are otherwise being assigned by district teachers, Krutulis said.

In a statement, Walla Walla Public Schools administrators wrote that parents can access an online portal to monitor in real time what books their children check out from the library, and added it followed best practices when approving the contested books.

"The policy and procedures WWPS implements when books in school libraries are challenged are recommended best practices from the Washington State School Directors' Association, in conjunction with state and national school library associations," Krutulis wrote.

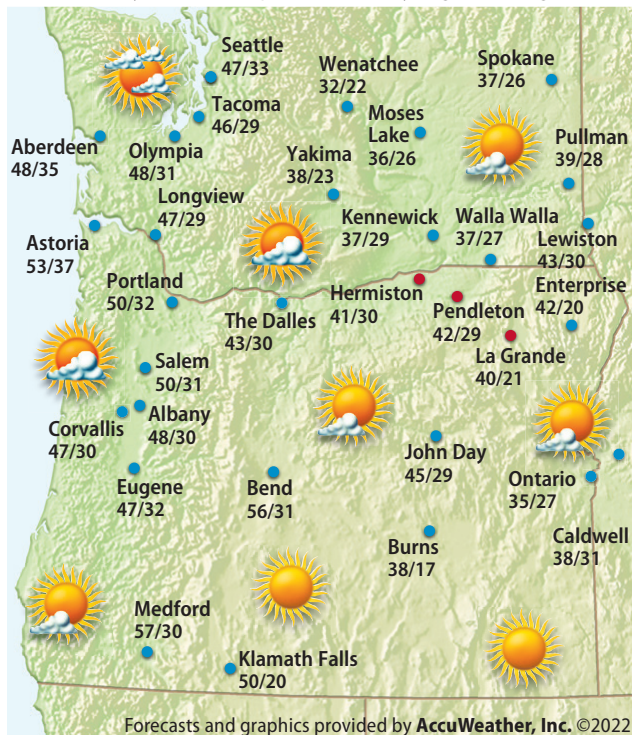
The school board received a written request on Jan. 17 to appeal the four books that the district's Library Materials Review Committee had recently reviewed and approved to remain in circulation. The board is in the process of reviewing the matter according to preexisting procedures, Krutulis said.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



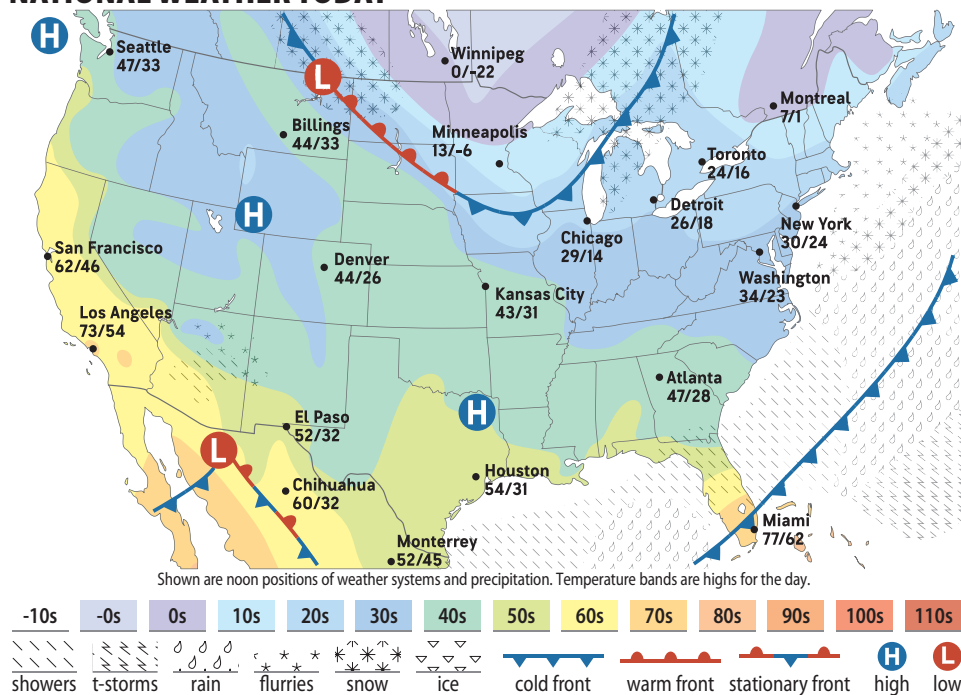
## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	47°	32°		
Normals	43°	28°		
Records	62° (1909)	-26° (1930)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	1.47"			
Normal month to date	1.06"			
Year to date	1.47"			
Last year to date	0.67"			
Normal year to date	1.06"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	51°	32°		
Normals	44°	29°		
Records	62° (1972)	-35° (1930)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	0.89"			
Normal month to date	0.79"			
Year to date	0.89"			
Last year to date	0.44"			
Normal year to date	0.79"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Sun.		
Boardman	ENE 3-6	SSE 3-6		
Pendleton	N 4-8	NW 4-8		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	7:27 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	4:47 p.m.			
Moonrise today	10:00 p.m.			
Moonset today	10:06 a.m.			
	Last	New	First	Full
	Jan 25	Jan 31	Feb 8	Feb 16

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 82° in Key West, Fla. Low -33° in Ogdensburg, N.Y.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Power companies announce B2H deal

East Oregonian

PORTLAND — Idaho Power, PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration have reached a non-binding agreement on the massive Boardman to Hemingway transmission line.

The BPA in a press release Wednesday, Jan. 19, announced the deal clarifies and updates roles and responsibilities for the B2H project.

"The proposed agreement is an important step for this 500-kilovolt, 290-mile transmission line, which would deliver 1,000 megawatts of reliable, affordable power in each direction between the Pacific Northwest and Mountain west," according to the press release.

Under the new deal, PacifiCorp will own 55% of the B2H transmission line with Idaho Power owning 45%. Idaho Power will acquire

an ownership interest in PacifiCorp transmission lines and other equipment between eastern Idaho and the Four Corners Substation in north-west New Mexico. B2H and those acquisitions amplify Idaho Power's connections to key energy markets that will help the company meet rapidly growing customer demand.

The Bonneville Power Administration will transfer its ownership interest in B2H to Idaho Power and will not participate in construction or have any ownership interest in the transmission line project.

Facilities PacifiCorp uses to serve BPA's customers in and around southeast Idaho will be transferred to Idaho Power. BPA will acquire transmission service over Idaho Power's transmission system, including the newly constructed B2H, to serve public utility custom-

ers in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

PacifiCorp will acquire Idaho Power transmission assets across southern Idaho that, according to the press release, combined with its majority stake in Boardman-Hemingway will increase its contiguous power transfer capability between its western and eastern systems, and will acquire additional transmission service from BPA to enable it to serve its growing customer base in central Oregon.

The three organizations now move into a negotiation phase to finalize the deal and seek regulatory approval.

Construction of the line is to begin in 2023, and B2H is anticipated to come online in 2026.

The term sheet and background information about B2H is available at the project website: [www.boardmantohemingway.com](http://www.boardmantohemingway.com).

## IN BRIEF

### Police believe Idaho angler drowned in Snake River

HELLS CANYON — Police believe an 85-year-old Idaho fisherman drowned in the Snake River on Monday, Jan. 17, after falling from a dock just below Hells Canyon Dam.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office received a report about 6 p.m. that day that Alberto Sillonis of Weiser was overdue in returning home from a fishing trip to Hells Canyon.

He had left his home that morning and planned to return home in the evening.

Baker County deputies, along with deputies from the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Idaho, began searching the route to Hells Canyon as well as checking hotels in nearby towns, according to a press release from the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

At about 9:07 p.m., deputies found Sillonis' 2008 Nissan Frontier pickup truck in the parking lot at the Hells Canyon Visitors Center.

Deputies searched the immediate vicinity and found two fishing poles, with the line from

one still in the water, on the center dock below the visitors center.

Sheriff Travis Ash and the Baker County Search and Rescue team deployed at about 6 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 18, to search for Sillonis.

Searchers covered the area near the docks and along the river's shore.

Idaho Power Company employees used a remote-operated vehicle with an underwater camera and sonar to search the river.

Searchers found a felt, short-brimmed hat on rocks about 60 feet from the docks, and Sillonis' family confirmed that it belonged to him. No other signs of Sillonis were found.

Sillonis is a white man who stands 5-foot-8 and weighs about 160 pounds. He has white hair.

If anyone has information about Sillonis, they can call Ash at 541-523-6415.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office thanked the Baker County Search and Rescue volunteers as well as Idaho Power and their employees for their assistance during the search.

—EO Media Group



Sillonis

**CORRECTIONS:** The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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