

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

146th Year, No. 50

WINNER OF 16 ONPA AWARDS IN 2021



INSIDE NORTHWEST MUSICIANS SHARE THEIR MUSIC

Idaho Power seeks property access before B2H approval

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Greg Larkin has worked for decades to create his dream retirement spot off the grid south of Morgan Lake. That dream could be off the table if proposed electricity lines are installed on his property.

Idaho Power Company is attempting to establish a 500-kilovolt line across Eastern Oregon that would extend approximately 300 miles from Boardman to Hemingway, Idaho. For locals like Larkin, the lines present a number of issues such as lowered property value and an overall decrease in the serenity of the land in question.

“The site view with the towers

going across and the static hiss of the line, I think it will destroy the peace and tranquility of the lake,” Larkin said.

And in Larkin’s case, the line could have serious negative health repercussions.

As Idaho Power pushes forward with its plans for the B2H transmission line, the company has filed about a dozen civil petitions in Union County Circuit Court to gain access to private property in order to conduct surveys and examinations on the land. The company’s verbiage in the petitions indicates that work could begin as early as 2023, if approved.

The sound of silence

Larkin, a native of La Grande,



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Greg Larkin, along with his blue heeler, Killie, on Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022, stands outside the home he is building on his property near Morgan Lake Road, La Grande.

has owned 160 acres just south of Morgan Lake since 1974. After moving back from The Dalles in the late 1990s, he has spent countless hours working to build up the land and create an ideal retirement location. In addition, work has been done on the trees and topography of the land to make the acreage as silent as possible.

The silence is important because Larkin suffers from tinnitus, a constant ringing in the ears that makes him sensitive to buzzing and loud noises. The crackling and hissing of the B2H power lines could force the landowner into an unlivable situation.

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Farm bill provokes partisan warfare

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The return of parliamentary guerilla warfare in the Oregon Legislature loomed Tuesday, Feb. 15, with the return of robotically-read bills in both the House and Senate.

The metallic speed-reading female voice is a tool the majority Democrats have used to offset the minority Republicans’ use of a constitutional quirk to require bills be read in their entirety before final passage.

The full readings, along with a boycott to prevent a two-thirds quorum for the Legislature to conduct business, has slowed or stalled sessions in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Official optimism from both parties that 2022 would be different now faces a challenge.

Both chambers had the bill reading machines going on Feb. 15, as Republicans and Democrats considered their next moves.

The fragile political peace threatened to unravel after a key panel voted Feb. 14 along party lines to advance a highly contentious farm labor bill.

The House Business and Labor Committee approved House Bill 4002, which would end exemptions of agricultural workers from state overtime pay laws.

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PENDLETON SCHOOL DISTRICT



MIDCO GETS THE BOOT

Ohio company wins bid despite having higher offer

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton School District’s 40-year relationship with Mid Columbia Bus Co. is coming to an end.

The Pendleton School Board on Monday, Feb. 14, approved a bid from First Student, a Cincinnati, Ohio, school bus company, to take over the district student transportation services for the next five years. Midco, the only other bidder for the contract, was the runner-up.

Michelle Jones, the district’s director of business services, said this was the first time Pendleton had put its school bus contract up for bid. Districts aren’t required to solicit bidders for transportation contracts, but Jones said school officials felt it was something they owed their various constituencies.

“I think we have a duty to our stakeholders, to our parents and our students to make sure that we are providing the best service to our families,” she said. “And we wanted to go out to bid to make sure that what we were offering was the best that we could do and I think we found that we couldn’t justify that



Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

TOP: A Mid Columbia Bus Co. school bus departs Washington Elementary School on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, in Pendleton. **ABOVE:** Students exit a Mid Columbia Bus Co. school bus Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, at Pioneer Park in Pendleton. The Pendleton School District’s 40-year relationship with MidCo is coming to an end after the Pendleton School Board on Feb. 14 approved a bid from an Ohio bus company to take over the district’s bus service.

by just continuing to renew contracts and we needed to see what else was available for our families.”

The district on Nov. 17 issued a request for proposal for its school bus services. Potential bidders would be evaluated on their qualifications, financial stability and their service and performance, among other factors. Following the Jan. 5 bid deadline,

Jones said a panel composed of herself, Superintendent Chris Fritsch and Matt Yoshioka, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, evaluated the proposals.

In the cover letter attached to its bid, First Student got off to an inauspicious start.

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ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL & OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

ESTIMATED RESULT TIME 2-4 DAYS

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11AM TO 2PM

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