

GOP says Brown playing politics with public records post

Governor's plan moves position under her control

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown came under fire Monday from the state's Republican Party for a proposal to house a proposed public records advocate at the Department of Administrative Services.

In previous proposals, the position was to be part of the Secretary of State's Office. Republicans claim Brown, a Democrat, now wants to move the position into a department controlled by the governor now that the Secretary of State's Office is about to be taken over by Dennis Richardson, a Republican.

"Such maneuvers by Gov. Brown serve to damage public trust," ORP Chairman Bill Currier said in a statement.

He claimed that the move would undercut Richardson's oversight re-

sponsibilities.

"The secretary of state in Oregon exists in large part to restore and maintain high public confidence, but needs all the tools possible to do this. Voters elected Dennis Richardson to restore balance and be this watchdog in order to guarantee that the rest of the government run by the governor is telling Oregonians the truth."

Under the arrangement proposed in the governor's legislative concept, the advocate would be appointed to a four-year term by the governor and be confirmed by the Oregon Senate.

The office of the advocate would be located in the office of the Department of Administrative Services, which would also provide administrative support.

One of the main responsibilities of the advocate would be mediating disputes between people requesting public records and state agencies.

The Governor's Office put the specific idea forward at a Dec. 15 meeting of the Attorney General's Public Records Law Reform Task Force.

Audit faults water resources dept.

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

SALEM — An audit released Thursday by the Secretary of State's Office calls on the state's Water Resources Department to improve its long-term planning and management of Oregon's water supply.

The department is responsible for allocating water rights, enforcing the state's water laws and other aspects of water management. It's overseen by a citizen commission.

Noting that the state's water problems are positioned to worsen, the secretary of state's findings say the department could do more to "sustain current and future water needs," protect groundwater, and collect and analyze information about the state's water.

The audit comes on the heels of the governor's 2015 county drought declarations and state efforts to prioritize water issues in their wake.

A legislative drought task force recently identified gaps in the state's systems and resources for preventing and responding to drought.

While the water resources department gathers a lot of information about water supply,



Sean Ellis/EO Media Group

A sugar beet field in Eastern Oregon is irrigated in June. An audit released Thursday by the Secretary of State's Office calls on the state's Water Resources Department to improve its long-term planning and management of Oregon's water supply.

the department hasn't been able to analyze all of it, the audit found.

For example, the department's water availability models are based on decades-old data, although the department has 17 years' worth of information about streamflow measurement collected after 1987.

In other areas of water management, such as water use reporting, the department lacks data altogether, the audit found.

"Only about 20 percent of water rights holders are required to report how much water they use to (the water resources department)," the audit states.

Agricultural users — who account for up to 85 percent of the state's water use — aren't required to report how much they use. As a result, the department lacks "a clear understanding of how much water is actually being used," the audit states.

Additionally, the department has focused more on collecting data on surface water than groundwater, demand for which is growing.

The audit also recommended the department adopt an overarching plan to set long-term water goals, and improve communication and how it manages its workload.

Finally, the audit noted that planning is key to managing

the state's water in the long run.

"There is growing pressure on Oregon's water system," the audit states. "The state relies on snowpack and rainwater for its water system, and it is unclear how climate change will affect future precipitation patterns and water availability."

The department's director, Thomas Byler, generally agreed with the audit's findings in a letter to Mary Wenger, the interim director of the secretary of state's audits division.

In many areas, Byler noted, the department had limited funding to enact all of the recommended changes, although they have already made some strides — such as using technology to improve internal communications and gathering feedback from the state's watermasters on how water use measurement could be improved.

Byler said that the state's 2012 Integrated Water Resources Strategy "provides a long-term blueprint" for helping the state meet its current and future instream and out-of-stream water needs, but that the department intended to set out more detailed goals to align with the broader strategy.

House Democrats propose new taxes

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Oregon House Democrats have developed a menu of several billion dollars in

new taxes they could consider during the 2017 session, according to a Legislative Revenue Office document obtained by the Portland Tribune.

Specific options from the list limit several personal income tax deductions, increase taxes on corporate income, tobacco and alcohol; and levy new taxes on corporate sales, soda and meals.

After the failure of Measure 97 during the November election, lawmakers are looking for ways to raise new revenue. The state faces a \$1.7 billion revenue shortfall in

2017-19 and increasing costs in health care and public retirement benefits. There also is interest in increasing investments in education, health care and senior services, all of which requires new revenue. Some of the Democrats' options are similar to the 2.5 percent corporate sales tax measure that voters rejected Nov. 8, but the rate is lower and applies to a broader base.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

ALPINE HOUSE
EMAIL: ALPINEHS@EONI.COM • MARGO PEPPERS, ADMINISTRATOR
204 NORTH PARK STREET • JOSEPH • 432-7402

Student of the Week

Kenon Nash
ENTERPRISE SDA SCHOOL

Kenon Nash is a 5th grade student that likes building things out of wood and climbing trees. He has an excellent work ethic and always stays current in his school work. He was on Honor Roll for first quarter and is a positive influence in the classroom. This recognition is well-deserved.

Proudly sponsored by
Community BANK
Member FDIC

Joseph 432-9050
Enterprise 426-4511
Wallowa 886-9151

The Student of the Week is chosen for academic achievement and community involvement. Students are selected by the administrators of their respective schools.

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

GRIDIRON CONTEST

WEEK 12 WINNER IS MICK COURTNEY

WITH 14 CORRECT PICKS

The \$200 grand prize will be drawn from the weekly contest winners on **Wednesday, December 21, 2016**

JB BANE ELECTRICAL & PLUMBING SUPPLIES

& COMPANY
ELECTRICAL & WATER SYSTEM CONTRACTOR

PUMPS • IRRIGATION
HARDWARE • APPLIANCE PARTS

208 S. RIVER ST. • ENTERPRISE, OR
www.jbbane.com • 541-426-3344

Pawsitively Perfect Gift

Surprise someone with a gift subscription this holiday season!

6 months **\$25.50**
1 year* **\$39.00**
Online only **\$39.00**

* \$39.00 is the in county price, \$56.00 for out of county subscribers.

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN
541-426-4567 • wallowa.com • PO Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

This week's athlete of the week is Enterprise High School basketball player Sarah Aschenbrenner. During the Outlaws Dec. 17-21, Aschenbrenner came off the bench with a hot hand scoring 12 points for the team.

Remarkably Aschenbrenner shot perfectly, going 5-5 from the field and 2-2 from the free throw line.

An EHS senior, Aschenbrenner also plays volleyball and makes regular appearances on the school's honor roll.

Sarah Aschenbrenner

Proudly Sponsored By:
Eds
Eastern Oregon's Full Service Propane Suppliers
201 E. Hwy 82, Enterprise
541-426-0320
www.edstaub.com

Ed Staub & Sons
Energy. Community. Service.

Wallowa County Chieftain

EARLY DEADLINES

for December 28th edition

CLASSIFIED, LEGAL & DISPLAY DEADLINE IS **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22nd AT NOON**

For more information or to place an ad:
Call Jennifer / Teresa at 541.426.4567

209 NW First St., Enterprise
www.wallowa.com

OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED DEC 26th

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

Introducing new Nurse Practitioner

Jennifer Barden

Jennifer brings 17 years of nursing experience covering the areas of emergency, trauma, oncology, telemedicine, pediatrics and public health. Now, as a nurse practitioner, Jennifer can diagnose illnesses, prescribe medications, take care of your annual physical exams, and help you stay well.

Now accepting new patients
Schedule your appointment today!
541.426.7900

Mountain View Medical Group
603 Medical Parkway
(next to Wallowa Memorial Hospital)
Enterprise, Oregon 97828

Wallowa Memorial Hospital
We treat you like family.
601 Medical Parkway, Enterprise, OR 97828 • 541-426-3111 • www.wchcd.org
Wallowa Memorial Hospital is an equal opportunity employer and provider.