

# Overtime:

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## How to get around it?

He said he and brother Kurt have been discussing how to get around the regulations. One way is to become more mechanized, chiefly by installing more automated center pivots for irrigation to eliminate the need for the hand-moving of wheel lines.

Another way would be to give up valuable farmland, which Melville said was virtually out of the question.

Dan Butterfield, of Butterfield Farms east of Joseph that raises mostly hay and wheat, agreed.

"We will be mechanizing more. We'll put more pivots in," he said. "The equipment will get bigger so less hired help is needed for that, but that's been going on last 50 years or so."

He employs four to five workers during the peak summer season, but has worked things around to avoid overtime.

"We try keep it down," he said. "But it will definitely harm some people."

He and others interviewed said the producers in Oregon the law will most likely hurt are ones such as dairies, which require 24/7 care of cows, and row-crop



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**Dakota Bly, an independent mechanic, left, helps Kurt Melville replace wiring on a tractor Thursday, March 10, 2022, at the Melville family-owned Cornerstone Farms Joint Venture near Enterprise.**

producers, which are labor intensive.

Coppin said another option would be to change the way workers are paid, such as putting them on salary rather than an hourly wage.

"That's one way everybody's talking. ... There are other ways around it," he said. "It's just a regulation that's been thought up by bunch of city people who are not business people."

Or, Butterfield said, split the work between more workers.

"We'll have to hire two people to do one person's

job," he said. "I don't know as the employees will be happy about that."

Several farmers said they just have difficulty finding those extra employees.

## Can't pass along costs

Melville said agricultural producers can't just pass along their increased costs, as they have to accept whatever the market offers.

"Oregon's already a high-labor state. That's another thing that puts an Oregon producer at a disadvantage," he said. "I have to take whatever price they offer."

Butterfield said lawmakers just don't seem to understand rural life.

"The problem with farming is it's so seasonal. If they could, we could average the time out, but there are times they have to work more than 40 hours a week," he said. "It's too bad they don't understand that when they pass these laws."

Melville and the other producers agreed they don't want to see their workers put at a disadvantage because of the new law.

"You want to make sure your workers are well paid," Melville said. "I think it's going to work out little differently than most people expect."

Russ Eoff, one of Cornerstone's few year-round, full-time employees, agreed with his boss.

He spends much of the winter working on equipment in preparation for the growing season. He also drives tractors and trucks for the farm all year long.

He had one simple statement on HB 4002:

"It's not right," he said, adding that it hurts both the farmers and their employees.

It won't leave him unemployed, but it will cut his wages as the Melvilles have to curtail overtime.

"If I wasn't doing this, I'd be home with my feet up," he said.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

**This building is among those at the home of the Wallowa History Center. The center is set to receive \$500,000 in funding from the general fund following the passage of HB 5202 Friday, March 4, 2022.**

# Funding:

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to arrive is uncertain.

Both Hansell and Rep. Bobby Levy voted in favor of the legislation, which now heads to Gov. Kate Brown's desk.

Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash, who is also a member of the fair board, said he was excited about the funding.

"Our deferred maintenance on the fairground is substantial," he said. "The newest building we have was built in the late '60s ... the Cloverleaf Hall. To make some upgrades, to replace some things and do some long-needed maintenance (is) really important, and that million dollars is going to go a long way to helping do that."

The county recently received \$500,000 in funding from Levy's portion of ARPA funding, which also was allocated for the fairgrounds.

Nash said the money from the general fund would be much less restrictive than ARPA funding — the only major restriction being that it is dedicated to infrastructure.

"The million has very

few strings attached to it," he said.

He added it will be "pretty easy" to find ways to use the added resources.

"We have some plans, and we are going to go through a process. This is all pretty new to us," he said. "We'll go before the fair board and we'll start to identify those places we'll spend the money."

David Weaver, president of the board for the Wallowa History Center, said the money will primarily go into converting the warehouse at the four-building complex into an interpretive center.

"For the \$500,000, all of (it) is basically is going to go toward getting that warehouse up and running, including us kicking off our capital campaign for more," he said.

Weaver said more — as much as another \$500,000, though he said that was a guess — will be needed between renovation and adding of exhibits to complete the interpretive center.

"By the time we get our exhibits in, it's going to take all the \$500,000 and then some," he said. "We (do) have a line on a contractor who specializes in historic restoration."

# Lathrop:

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to court records. The elder Lathrop died in December 2018. Betsy Lathrop was not his legal guardian, but did she have power of attorney for him, her attorney said.

The charges on which Lathrop was convicted involved the purchase and installation of flooring and a washer and dryer in her Lostine home and the appropriation of money for expenses she said was for her father's benefit.

During the sentencing, Betsy Lathrop asked Collins for some leniency in reporting to jail. She is to serve the 40 days at the Umatilla County Jail in Pendleton with which Wallowa County has a contract. Lathrop asked for the leniency primarily because of her poor health. Collins allowed her to wait until March 21 at 5 p.m. to report to the jail. He also allowed her to have medical furloughs for doctor's appointments while in jail. The delayed reporting to jail also allows Lathrop to arrange for someone to look over her Lostine home and animals while she is in jail.

## For and against

Both the prosecution — headed Friday by Christian Stringer — and the defense had witnesses to support their cases.

For the prosecution, Betsy's brother, Nick Lathrop, recounted what he believed were wrongs she had done to their father.

"I will not ever forgive her for what she did to our dad for two years and how she treated him," Nick Lathrop said.

Speaking on Betsy Lathrop's behalf, Kathleen Wecks, who had submitted a letter to the court, explained how she had only known Lathrop since 2017 and had a limited knowledge of the situation.

"I came in pretty objectively without any preconceived opinions," Wecks said. "What I heard from the prosecution witnesses as well as the defense was that Mr. Wayne Lathrop was in poor condition and he'd call Betsy and have her come. There were various testimonies of his improved hygiene, nutrition, demeanor and no complaints from community members about the care or that Mr. Wayne Lathrop had complained about the care."

She said Betsy Lathrop seemed to be the one giving her father the best care. She

said others expressed concern, "but they chose not to do anything — they didn't spend any money, they didn't repair, they didn't offer food or transportation — all the things that Betsy did when she was living with her father. She received no compensation and when she was asked to leave, she left and they immediately paid for a live-in caregiver and then paid for him to be in a residential facility, so they acknowledged his needs for a paid attendant, yet she was not compensated at all. I watched her prepare Sunday meals and such for the family and care for them."

Betsy Lathrop's brother, Jack Lathrop, joined his brother in denying the quality of care that Betsy gave their father. He said he had to "file for guardianship to get Betsy out of there."

He said it appeared she was operating the house she shared with him "as a boarding house for Betsy and her friends."

Jack Lathrop said drug paraphernalia was found in rooms Betsy's friends were using.

In her statement to the court, Betsy Lathrop said family relationships were far from the best.

"The closest thing my

father and I had was our relationship, because attempts to have relationships with other parts of the family dwindled," she told the judge.

In Collins' statements on sentencing, he said violation of a family member's trust is the most disturbing.

"This involved a breach of trust, and that's pretty significant," the judge said. "The jail sentence is meant to be the 'just desserts,' if you will, for the breach of trust in this case."

# Merkley:

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He also said the recently passed infrastructure bill provides much-needed financial dollars for rural development, especially in the areas of transportation, broadband

and water projects.

He cited, for example, \$50 billion in the bill to help with water infrastructure.

"We did get a tremendous amount of funding that we never have had in this infrastructure bill," he said.

He was also asked about dam removal on the Snake River, and said Washington

Sen. Patty Murray is chairing a research project to learn more about that possibility.

"Can and how do we address the transportation issues, the flood control issues, irrigation issues, the recreation issues if we were to pursue dam removal?" he said of some of the questions that need to be addressed.

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