

EDITORIALS

Graduation rates do raise local concerns

When it comes to high school graduation rates, doing better than the state average is not necessarily good, especially when the state as a whole was second to last in the nation among states that reported data in 2013.

Statewide, students graduating from high school in four years was up to 72 percent — and 76 percent completed a diploma in five years — higher than last year's 68.7 percent, but still a solid C-minus in the old way of grading things.

That means 28 percent of Oregon's teenagers are not completing their high school diploma in four years.

The results are discouraging, particularly in light of Oregon's 40-40-20 Goal, which aims to have 100 percent of Oregon's citizens have at least a high school diploma or equivalent by 2025.

The goal states that 40 percent of Oregonians will hold bachelor's degrees or higher; 40 percent will hold associate degrees or two-year certifications, and the remaining 20 percent will have a high school diploma or equivalent.

It's perhaps more disheartening to see our schools battle the constant flux in requirements for graduation, particularly with new testing methods, new standards and new grading methods.

We're talking Smarter Balanced Assessments, Common Core State Standards and proficiency grading.

Not to say these new methods aren't to the overall long-term benefit of students, teachers and parents, but we are not optimistic that they will last.

It seems there is always a new and improved method of testing, teaching or grading to guarantee "no one is left behind" in his or her education. These new methods often result in more money being spent at the district level for "approved curriculum" or "improved testing centers."

And it's not just in schools. Students have more accountability than they're given credit for when it comes to their studies. If parents and students themselves do not place a high importance on a diploma, it will be difficult to make meaningful progress toward graduation rates.

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-ObsERVER* via fax (503-623-2395) or email (kholland@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11

- **Monmouth Library Advisory Board** — 7 a.m., Monmouth Public Library meeting room, 168 S. Ecols St., Monmouth, 503-838-0722.
- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas, 503-623-8173.
- **Polk Soil and Water Conservation District Board** — 6 p.m., USDA Service Center, 580 Main St., Suite A, Dallas, 503-623-9680.
- **Monmouth Park and Recreation Board** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth, 503-838-0722.

THURSDAY, FEB. 12

- **Polk County Fire District No. 1 Board** — 6 p.m., Central Station 90, 1800 Monmouth St., Independence, 503-838-1510.
- **Luckiamute Watershed Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth, 503-837-0237.
- **Falls City City Council** — 7:30 p.m., Falls City Community Center, 320 N. Main St., Falls City, 503-787-3631.

TUESDAY, FEB. 17

- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas, 503-623-8173.
- **Independence Historic Preservation Commission** — 4 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence, 503-838-1212.
- **Dallas Park Advisory Board** — 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas, 503-831-3502.
- **Falls City School Board** — 5:30 p.m., Falls City High School resource room, 111 N. Main St., Falls City, 503-787-3521.
- **Polk County Hearings Officer** — 6 p.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas, 503-623-9237.
- **Dallas City Council** — 7 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas, 503-831-3502.
- **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth, 503-838-0722.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18

- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas, 503-623-8173.
- **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth, 503-838-0722.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Levy is worthy, but eye consolidation

I support the Polk County public safety levy.

We need to restore our sheriff and jail to expected levels. That said, I also want our government organizations from city through federal to join the 21st century and redo the tax structure so it is consistent and fair.

They also need to constantly prove efficiency in spending, e.g. how much would we save by having the city police departments merge with the sheriff's department?

*Jim O'Brien
Dallas*

Do patrols impact insurance rates?

I am curious if our insurance rates in Polk County are higher because we don't have deputies on patrol 24/7? What is the ratio of decreased insurance rates to increased deputies, or is there one? Are home, fire and burglary rates tied to insurance rates linked to state, county and city protection services? Can our insurance rates be reduced if our services are increased and which is the most cost effective/risk assessment ratio differential?

I am interested in the commissioners' take on this issue as it affects every residents' bottom line.

*Steve Dunn
Independence*

Keep marijuana out of city of Dallas

I have been a resident here for over 70 years. Generally, I prefer to be a part of the silent majority. But the recent newspaper articles on changing city ordinances to allow a medical marijuana business and possible dispensary to operate in Dallas has prompted me to write this letter.

Please, city of Dallas leaders, do not allow this type of business to operate in Dallas. Also, consider what has happened to the tax base in other localities that have allowed this to come into their areas.

Of course, I know that marijuana is going to be legal in the state of Oregon. Please don't kid yourself; the ramifications of a business such as this in our commu-

Marijuana won't be good for Dallas

If a Dallas City Councilor thinks there is money to be made off the taxation of marijuana, they need to hear from you before they cast their vote.

As a prior resident of Josephine County and a recently retired law enforcement officer with 30 years experience, I watched the face of Josephine County change drastically.

Josephine County has the largest per capita of medicinal marijuana growers in the state. During the marijuana harvest, hundreds of laborers move into the community to harvest the crop. Most of these laborers all have Oregon Trail Cards at the expense of the Oregon taxpayer.

The tax base in Josephine County has eroded to the point that there are only two deputies for the entire county. Even their public library is closed. No one wants to pay taxes, including for law enforcement. They just want to profit from growing marijuana.

It is very common to see citizens walking around carrying firearms because it is the only protection they have. The crime rate rises so drastically during the harvest season, the Oregon State Police saturates the area with troopers from out of the area.

I've watched Oregon's medical marijuana growers use Oregon's marijuana laws to grow marijuana only to profit for themselves. Why will Measure 91 be any different? A pound of marijuana currently sells in Oregon for \$1,500 to \$2,500. A pound of marijuana sells in a state such as Utah that does not allow the growing of medicinal marijuana for \$5,000. How much marijuana will these growers under Measure 91 turn in to be taxed and how much will go out the backdoor?

Please educate our Dallas City Councilors by contacting the Ron Foggin, city manager, at 503-831-3502 or at rwfoggin@dallasor.gov.

*Walt Markee
Dallas*

Can't afford to pay more taxes locally

Living in Dallas for decades and being retired, it's almost impossible to make ends meet with all the fees and taxes that this city and Polk County are getting. And now they want more money.

The burden to me is great. Taxes keep going up faster than my Social Security. Food, medicine or taxes — which one is more important to you?

Stop taking what little the fixed income population has and let us live without fear of losing what little we have.

Live within your budget. I've got to. Vote "no" on the law enforcement levy.

*Arthur Leppin Jr.
Dallas*

Senator's bill is simply appalling

I know that there is always a lot of useless stuff that happens at the beginning of the legislative session, but I was appalled by the proposal by Sen. Brian Boquist to prohibit Oregon courts from applying Shariah law, the religious law of Islam.

This seems like classic fear mongering and probably racism, as well. Or maybe it's just ignorance.

I am sure it is high on the list of needs for our state and his constituents. I am embarrassed that he supposedly represents me in the senate. Not in my name.

*Dale Derouin
Dallas*

More LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, Page 5A

How to Contact Officials

- GOVERNOR**
Gov. John Kitzhaber (Dem.)
160 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-378-4582
Email: via website,
<http://governor.oregon.gov/>
- STATE LEGISLATORS**
Sen. Arnie Roblan
(District 5, Democrat)
5-417 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1705
sen.arnieroblan@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/roblan
- Sen. Jackie Winters**
(District 10, Republican)
5-301 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1710
sen.jackiewinters@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/winters
- Sen. Brian Boquist**
(District 12, Republican)
5-305 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1712
sen.brianboquist@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/boquist
- Rep. David Gomberg**
(District 10, Democrat)
H-471 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1410
rep.davidgomberg@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/gomberg
- Rep. Paul Evans**
(District 20, Democrat)
H-281 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1420
rep.paul.evans@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/evans
- Rep. Mike Nearman**
(District 23, Republican)
H-378 State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1423
rep.mikenearman@state.or.us
www.oregonlegislature.gov/nearman
- U.S. CONGRESS**
Sen. Ron Wyden (Dem.)
221 Dirksen SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: 202-224-5244
Fax: 202-228-2717
Salem office: 707 13th St. SE,
Suite 285, Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-589-4555
Email: via website,
www.wyden.senate.gov
- Sen. Jeff Merkley (Dem.)**
313 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: 202-224-3753
Fax: 202-228-3997
Salem office: 495 State St. SE,
Suite 330, Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-362-8102
Email: via website,
www.merkley.senate.gov
- Rep. Kurt Schrader (Dem.)**
108 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: 202-225-5711
Fax: 202-225-5699
Salem office: 544 Ferry St. SE,
Suite 2, Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-588-9100
Fax: 503-588-5517
Email: via website,
www.schrader.house.gov
- POLK COUNTY Board of Commissioners**
850 Main St.
Dallas, OR 97338
Phone: 503-623-8173
www.co.polk.or.us
- CITIES**
Dallas
187 SE Court St.
Dallas, OR 97338
503-623-2338
www.ci.dallas.or.us
Falls City
299 Mill St.
Falls City, OR 97344
503-787-3631
www.falls-city-oregon.gov
Independence
555 S. Main St.
Independence, OR 97351
503-838-1212
www.ci.independence.or.us
Monmouth
151 W. Main St.
Monmouth, OR 97361
503-838-0722
www.ci.monmouth.or.us

Polk County
Itemizer-ObsERVER

Vol. 140, No. 6 (USPS) - 437-380

The official newspaper of Polk County • Serving Polk County families since 1875

Winner of 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014 General Excellence Awards from the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, OR, Independence, OR and Monmouth, OR. Published weekly at 147 SE Court Street Dallas, Oregon 97338 Phone: 503-623-2373 Fax: 503-623-2395

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Polk County — One Year \$27
Other Oregon Counties — One Year \$33
Outside of Oregon — One Year \$38

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to: Polk County Itemizer-ObsERVER, P.O. Box 108, Dallas, Oregon 97338

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HOW TO REACH US

- NEWSROOM**
Nancy AdamsPublishernadams@polkio.com
Kurt Holland.....Managing Editor.....kholland@polkio.com
Lukas Eggen.....Sports Editor.....leggen@polkio.com
Jolene Guzman.....Dallas/Falls City/Polk County Reporterjguzman@polkio.com
Emily MentzerMonmouth/Independence Reporterementzer@polkio.com
- DISPLAY ADVERTISING**
Heidi LeppinDisplay Advertising Managerhleppin@polkio.com
Rachel BestDisplay Advertising.....rbest@polkio.com
Karen SanksClient Servicesksanks@polkio.com
- CLASSIFIED LINE ADVERTISING**
Dawn Ohrenioads@polkio.com
- PRODUCTION**
Kathy Hugginsiosales@polkio.com
Karyn Presseliosales@polkio.com
- BOOKKEEPING**
Pat Letschpletsch@polkio.com
- Web: www.polkio.com Phone: 503-623-2373 Fax: 503-623-2395**