

Local & State

Effort to put recreational pot sales on Nov. 6 ballot in La Grande falls short

By Max Denning
The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — The citizen-led initiative to vote on the ban of recreational marijuana in La Grande came up short of the necessary amount of signatures to secure a place on the November ballot.

Robin Church, Union County clerk, said the petition came to her with only 1,199 signatures — one short of the necessary 1,200. Then, in the pre-processing phase of the signature counting, the Union County clerk's office found 47 signatures in the first 20 pages that were from individuals living outside the city limits. That caused Church to end the counting process and determine that there were not enough valid signatures to place the initiative on the ballot.

Organizers David Moyal and Christopher Jennings began collecting signatures for the petition less than two weeks prior to the July 17 deadline.

Moyal said he originally began the paperwork for the initiative in March but stopped the process in April when the La Grande City Council began official steps toward letting voters decide whether to continue the ban on recreational marijuana.

In 2014, recreational marijuana was made legal in Oregon. However, the Legislature allowed counties that voted against legalization to vote on whether to legalize dispensaries.

The City of La Grande voted against legalization by a vote of 51 percent to 49 percent. This led to the La Grande City Council opting out of the sale of recreational marijuana.

After lengthy consideration, this April the city council voted 5-2 in support of a measure giving the citizens of La Grande the option of repealing the ban.

In May, the council held the first formal reading of the measure, without much discussion from the public or the council itself.

At the June city council meeting, the second reading of the measure was held, and more opponents to repealing the ban attended the meeting. After their testimony, the council voted 6-1 to leave the ordinance as is, with councilor Nicole Howard being the single vote against.

With the initiative's failure to secure 1,200 signatures, supporters of allowing voters to decide on whether to allow recreational marijuana dispensaries in La Grande will have to wait until 2020 to try again to get it on the ballot.

The organizers of the initiative have said all along this isn't solely a marijuana issue.

In a July 2 Observer article, Jennings noted that signing the petition was not an admission of being pro-marijuana: "It's very much about expressing our right to vote," he said.

Moyal said they plan to revive petition efforts again prior to the 2020 election.

EXPANSION OF CASCADE-SISKIYOU NATIONAL MONUMENT

Trump administration backs Obama's expansion of So. Oregon monument

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — A dispute over acts of Congress in 1906 and 1937 has put the Trump administration in court — and into the unusual position of supporting a proclamation by former President Barack Obama.

Contrary to President Donald Trump's numerous efforts to shred Obama's legacy, U.S. Justice Department lawyers are in Obama's corner as they defend his expansion of a national monument in Oregon.

That puts the Trump administration in direct opposition with timber interests that Trump vowed to defend in a May 2016 campaign speech in Eugene.

However, that opposition may be temporary in a case full of ironic twists that centers on a unique habitat where three mountain ranges converge. It is home to more than 200 bird species, the imperiled Oregon spotted frog, deer, elk and many kinds of fish, including the endangered Lost River sucker.

A federal judge is being asked to consider limits of power among all three

government branches. For the Trump administration, the case is about protecting the power of the president of the United States, even if it was Obama who exercised his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 that allows a president to declare a national monument.

During his last week in office, Obama nearly doubled the size of Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in heavily forested southern Oregon, to more than 150 square miles. Commercial timber harvesting is prohibited in the monument except for ecological restoration, so logging companies and local governments were deprived of revenue from timber that was suddenly placed out of their reach.

In March 2017, the American Forest Resource Council, a timber-industry advocacy group, sued the federal government in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, charging that Obama's expansion of the monument was unlawful. A group of Oregon counties that receive revenue from logging sued separately in the same court.

The advocacy group

insisted Obama exceeded his authority because Congress in 1937 designated much of the land in question for timber harvesting to allow local communities to prosper. The expanded area included 62 square miles designated by Congress for "permanent forest production," the group said, telling the court its members "rely on timber sourced from federal lands in and around the Monument to support profitable operations."

Some observers, seeing the Trump administration develop a record of favoring business interests over environmental concerns, figured it wouldn't fight the lawsuits.

"I was worried that the timber industry and DOJ would come to an agreement that would not be good for the monument," said Susan Jane Brown, an attorney for environmental groups.

Instead, after a lengthy pause in the court proceedings, Justice Department attorneys in June asked the judge handling both lawsuits to rule in the government's favor without trial.

"I don't see this at all as the administration siding with the environmentalists,

but rather doing all they can to shore up presidential power," said Rhett Lawrence, conservation director of the Sierra Club's Oregon chapter.

In taking that approach, the administration lawyers said even the judiciary branch has little say in the matter. When a president acts with authority delegated to him by Congress, they wrote, judicial review "if available at all, is extremely limited in scope."

"A suit against the President in his official capacity is a suit against the United States itself," wrote Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Wood and two Justice Department attorneys.

They noted Congress, under the Antiquities Act, gave the president the power to declare objects of historical and scientific interest as national monuments, and to reserve federal lands for their protection.

Cases challenging presidential authority under the Antiquities Act usually fail, said Lawson Fite, the forest council's general counsel. But he said this one is different because of the statute Congress passed in 1937.

tence of the ridge, as well as its northward extension, have distinguished the current heat wave.

Forecasters have given the name "Four Corners High" to a ridge that typically is centered, for much of the summer, around the area where Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico meet.

The triple-digit temperatures that are common in the desert Southwest can expand into our region when the Four Corners High elongates — or "amplifies," as meteorologists say — to the northwest.

And that's precisely what the ridge has done since the second week of July, Barker said.

"Earlier in the summer (the ridge) was farther to the east, and that kept us cooler," he said. "I enjoyed that."

One atmospheric factor that can suppress the Four Corners High is its meteorologic opposite — the low-pressure trough.

These are the storms, sweeping in from the Pacific Ocean, that bring rain and snow to the West during the fall and winter.

During summer these

troughs are generally much weather, their main effect being to flatten the Four Corners High and allow northwesterly winds to usher in cooler air from the Pacific.

The presence of the world's biggest ocean, with summer water temperatures off the Oregon Coast generally in the 50s, explains why even during heat waves that broil the Willamette Valley, the beaches usually bask in the mild 60s.

Baker County is much too far east — and on the opposite side of the Cascade Mountains — to be influenced so strongly by the Pacific's chill waters.

But even a weak trough during summer can change the direction of the air flow enough, and push the Four Corners High far enough to the southeast, to cool daytime temperatures in our region from the upper 90s to, say, the low to mid-80s.

It hasn't been that cool in Baker City for almost three weeks — the high was 81 on July 10.

The National Weather Service is forecasting highs in the mid-80s Thursday

through Saturday, but Barker said if those outlier computer models prove the more accurate, it could be even a bit cooler.

The current forecast actually calls for essentially average temperatures.

As Barker pointed out, it is the height of summer.

In Baker City the two hottest days of the year, based on the average high temperature, are July 27 and 28, when the average high is 89.

The daily average high fluctuates between 86 and 88 from July 29 through Aug. 12.

OREGON GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Buehler supports initiative to end state sanctuary laws

By Gary A. Warner
WesCom News Service

SALEM — Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, the Republican candidate for governor, said Thursday that he will support an initiative on the November ballot to repeal Oregon's "sanctuary state" laws.

Measure 105 would repeal a 1987 state law that bars Oregon law enforcement officials from arresting people or aiding in federal investigations, based solely on an individual's immigration status.

"I support Measure 105," Buehler said in a statement released late Thursday.

"I see it as way to remove barriers between local and state law enforcement communicating and cooperating with federal officials to keep Oregonians safe. It's regrettable that this measure is even needed."

Buehler, the grandson of German immigrants who came to Oregon after World War I, said Thursday he opposes racial profiling by law enforcement.

"If the measure passes, as governor, I will support legislation that ensures that the immigrant community can feel safe in communicating with law enforcement about criminal activities," Buehler said. "We can bring the best ideas of Republicans and Democrats together to ensure the safety of our community while at the same time adhering to our values as a nation of immigrants."

Last year, Buehler opposed House Bill 3464, which extended the sanctuary law protections by effectively blocking schools, courts and local governments from routinely giving federal immigration officials the addresses of people residing in Oregon, regardless of their legal status. The bill was passed by the majority-Democratic House and Senate without any Republican support. Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill into law.

Brown has frequently reiterated support for the sanctuary law.

"Oregon is a welcoming place for all who call our state home," Brown tweeted in January. "These values were affirmed some 30 yrs (sic) ago in state statute, which are in full compliance with federal law."

Oregon voters will decide Nov. 6 on abortion funding

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon voters will decide in November whether one of America's most progressive states should keep funding abortions.

Opponents of the funding gathered just enough signatures to put the issue on the ballot, the secretary of state's office said Friday.

"I'm thrilled," said Marilyn Shannon, one of the chief petitioners. "We've been trying to do this since 2012."

The retired schoolteacher and former Republican state senator said she opposes abortion.

Gov. Kate Brown, a Democratic, last year signed a bill expanding coverage on abortions and other reproductive services to thousands of Oregonians, regardless of

income, citizenship status or gender identity.

The measure going before Oregon voters says the state "shall not spend public funds for any abortion, except when medically necessary or as may be required by federal law."

Similar measures failed in 1978, with 52 percent voting against the move, and in 1986, when 55 percent of voters were opposed.

Emily McLain, executive director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, said the new measure isn't aligned with the values of Oregonians.

"One of the biggest issues for us is it forces the state to set a dangerous precedent by cherry picking what will and won't be covered by insurance," McLain said.

COUNCIL

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Prospective candidates must be registered voters who have lived within the city limits since Nov. 6, 2017. They must pick up a petition from City Recorder Julie Smith, at Suite 205 in City Hall, 1655 First St., and then collect signatures from at least 40 people registered to vote in city elections.

Petitions and signatures must be submitted by 4 p.m. on Aug. 28 at the city recorder's office.

If there are fewer than four candidates on the Nov. 6 ballot, then people who receive write-in votes, and who are otherwise eligible to serve, could be elected, as happened a few times in the past.

HEAT

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And residents will have to endure at least three more stifling days before even moderate relief is likely.

Based on the current forecast for today and Tuesday — highs around 100 — this July will be the second-hottest at the Baker City Airport, where temperature records date to 1943.

The average high temperature is likely to be about 91.7 degrees. The only hotter July was 1985, when the average high was 92.0.

(The long-term average for the month is 85.2 degrees.)

The culprit, should you feel it necessary to assign blame for your sweat-soaked shirts and restless nights, is what meteorologists call a high-pressure ridge.

That's basically an area where the air is descending — and as air descends it compresses and warms.

The general situation is hardly unusual — it is late July, of course, and statistically the hottest period of the year around here.

But Barker said the persis-

ELTRYM THEATER
JULY 27 - AUG 2
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - FALLOUT PG-13
Ellen Hunt and her team, along with some familiar allies, are up against time after a mission gone wrong.
FRI-THURS: (3:30) 6:30, 9:30
MAMMA MIA! HERE WE GO AGAIN PG-13
Five years after the events of Mamma Mia! See the ladies about her mother's past while preparing for her!
FRI-THURS: (4:00) 7:00, 9:40
THE EQUALIZER 2 R
Denzel Washington: Robert McCall returns justice for the exploited and oppressed, but how far will he go when their is someone he loves?
FRI-THURS: (3:45) 6:45, 9:45
*No Tix Tuesday (Bargain Matinee)
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