

House closes domestic abuser gun loophole

By Sarah Zimmernan
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon House moved Tuesday to close a loophole that allowed domestic abusers to illegally hold on to their firearms.

Lawmakers voted 43-15 in favor of stronger enforcement mechanisms for a 2015 bill that prevents those with domestic violence or stalking convictions from carrying firearms.

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, who sponsored the measure,

said that although the 2015 bill banned domestic abusers from owning guns, that law didn't lay out exactly how courts would take away those firearms. Some domestic abusers were able to hold on to their weapons by avoiding court hearings.

Williamson's proposal would mandate domestic abusers submit a notice to the court that they have dispossessed themselves of their weapons, otherwise they'll be charged with contempt.

The Democrat from Portland said

that extra enforcement mechanisms are necessary because "firearms and domestic violence are a deadly combination."

At least 32 people died in domestic violence related incidents in 2017, according to Oregon Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. Of those, 19 were killed by firearms. Nationally, women are five times more likely to be killed when their abuser has access to a gun, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

TRASH

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The largest cost is getting the driver to each person's door, and the volume of the garbage disposed is a very small fraction of the actual cost of the collection process, Henry said.

"It's something we could probably look at," he said of the biweekly pickup idea. "I've thought one of the feasible options might be doing a smaller container and keeping it still every week (collection). But when you look at because of the main cost being getting to

each person's door, the price discount that you could really achieve would not be significant."

Henry said he will definitely look at potential solutions that reduce the cost for elderly customers and lower income families.

"Nothing's impossible," he said. "We can figure that out. I think the biggest question would be how many customers we have that would want that. If a small amount of customers did this more for the hardship situation, the probable impact of that would not be significant but say if 30% of our custom-

ers go to a different schedule, it might actually start to impact both revenue and the efficiency."

Mayor Loran Joseph said he's interested in exploring ways to reduce the volume of garbage going to the landfill, since expansions to the landfill are one of the reasons Henry cited, in a letter to the Council, for the proposed rate increases.

"I think a smaller container with larger overfilling fees would be something that could reduce the amount of volume but help rates and also not be a cost rate venture," Joseph said.

In other business Tuesday the Council:

- Approved the financial audit for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018.
- Endorsed liquor license applications for Copper Belt Winery, which operates on Main Street and wants to open a second location at 3451 Broadway St. and for a new business, Rain Barrel Cider-works.
- At the start of Tuesday's meeting, Casey Johnson from the Baker City Fire Department was promoted to lieutenant. His girlfriend, Kate, pinned on his badge.

MOSQUITOES

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He's responsible for dealing with mosquitoes in the property tax-funded district, which includes much of Baker Valley (including Baker City) as well as Bowen and Keating valleys.

But 2019 much more resembles 2017, when the melted remnants of a heavy snowpack gave mosquitoes an abundance of breeding areas.

"2017 was a busy year start to finish," Hutchinson said. "This looks more like that."

Hutchinson said he and a co-worker have been checking some notorious breeding sites for the past week or so, looking for larvae.

They apply products, sometimes from the ground and occasionally from the air, that kill larvae before they hatch into adults that can fly and, in the case of female mosquitoes, bite people and other mammals to procure the "blood meal" the insects need to nourish their eggs.

This approach isn't always successful, so Hutchinson also has at his disposal insecticides that kill adult mosquitoes.

The biggest pests around here by far are floodwater mosquitoes, Hutchinson said. They breed in both natural water sources — ponds and the like — and in

flood-irrigated fields and pastures.

The combination of heavy rain and melting snow earlier this month created plenty of temporary pools around the county, but Hutchinson said he has seen little evidence that those are harboring mosquitoes.

The reason, he said, is temperature. The warmer the water the faster the bugs progress through their life cycle, and when the pools were most plentiful the temperatures were low enough to slow the process.

"Temperature definitely plays a big role," Hutchinson said.

Fortunately, much of the water has soaked into the ground, leaving the larvae, in effect, high and dry.

"With the lower temperatures mosquitoes aren't going to have enough time to hatch out before the water dries up," he said.

But with a warming trend over the past week or so, Hutchinson expects to start seeing a proliferation of larvae.

He has already received a few phone calls from residents reporting adult mosquitoes (he encourages people to call his office at 541-523-1151 and leave a message if he's out).

Hutchinson said he's seen some in his own yard.

The culprits, he said, aren't floodwater

mosquitoes but rather anopheles species that can survive winter, as adults, by sheltering in garages or other relatively warm spots.

When temperatures rise to around 70 or above — as it did at the Baker City Airport on Thursday and Friday, and again Monday and Tuesday — those mosquitoes rouse from their winter sluggishness.

And the females are hungry. "They're looking for a blood meal so they can go lay their eggs," Hutchinson said. "They're pretty aggressive at this time of year."

As the season progresses the floodwater species — mainly from the aedes genus — become the predominant problem in the area, he said.

Another common summer mosquito is the culex tarsalis, the type that most frequently carries the West Nile virus.

Last year was the first in Hutchinson's tenure with the Baker Valley Vector Control District in which none of the more than 260 samples of mosquitoes he trapped for testing, the majority of those culex tarsalis, was infected with that virus.

The absence of a positive test was "really surprising," he said.

"I kept expecting it to pop up," Hutchinson said.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Baker Community Choir concerts May 3-5

Baker Community Choir will perform its spring concerts May 3, 4 and 5 at the Baker Heritage Museum,, 2480 Grove St.

Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. on Friday, May 3, and Sunday, May 4, and at 3 p.m. on Sunday May 5. The Baker Valley Children's Choir will join the Community Choir for the Friday and Saturday performances. Donations will be accepted at the door. Proceeds support the Children's Choir.

The Community Choir is directed by Hannah Violette. Marci Gerratt directs the Children's Choir.

The song selection celebrates home and country, including a medley from "The Music Man," a collection of John Denver hits, and patriotic songs such as "Pledge Allegiance" and "God Bless America."

OTEC offers bus rides to annual meeting

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative is offering free bus rides to its members who want to attend OTEC's annual meeting May 4 in John Day.

Sign-up sheets are available at the Baker County Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St. The bus will leave the Senior Center on May 4 at 8:15 a.m. Following the meeting, the buses will return, arriving at the Senior Center by 3:15 p.m.

The chartered bus can hold 47 passengers and has onboard restrooms as well as storage for wheelchairs and walkers. However, riders will need to be able to climb the steps to reach their seat.

The annual meeting will be at the Grant County Fairgrounds, 411 N.W. Bridge St. in John Day. Doors open at 10 a.m. for members to register and browse informational booths. The business meeting will begin at 11 a.m. with an update from OTEC CEO Les Penning and Board President Austin Bingaman, followed by prize drawings and giveaways. There will also be live music provided by Generations and a catered lunch.

Pistol Shooters Association match Sunday

A U.S. Pistol Shooters Association Match is scheduled for Sunday, April 28, at the Virtue Flat Range, 1 mile east of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center off Highway 86.

Registration starts at 8 a.m., with shooting from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

The event is open to any revolver or pistol 9 mm or larger. The course of fire varies, and competitors should bring 150 to 200 rounds.

Targets will be USPSA paper, steel poppers and plates.

More information is available by calling Phil O'Connell at 208-850-1313 or at www.prpshooters.com

Baker woman in nursing program

KEARNEY, Nebraska — Hailey Keller of Baker City participated in the Nightingale White Coat Ceremonies recently recognizing new students in the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing's Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

The one-year intensive program requires students to take classes and do clinical rotations in the spring, summer and fall semesters. Students started classes in January 2019 and will graduate in December of this year.

— Compiled from staff reports and press releases

SCHOOLS

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Baker High School principal Greg Mitchell, Skye Flanagan, Baker Middle School principal, and Doug Dalton, Baker Technical Institute president, reviewed programs implemented during the first year of the Ballot Measure 98 funding, also known as the "High School Success" fund. The school administrators then detailed how programs will continue.

Voters in every county, 65% statewide, supported the ballot measure in the November 2016 election, Director Kevin Cassidy pointed out.

"That shows you the importance placed on (the programs it supports)," he said.

Cassidy, who is president-elect of the Oregon School Boards Association, said the Legislature's Student Success Committee and Gov. Kate Brown's Office expect the

measure to be fully funded in this legislative session.

The measure allowed the Oregon Department of Education to distribute a total of \$170 million during the 2017-2019 biennium to school districts and charter schools throughout the state.

Baker School District programs begun in the first half of the biennium with Ballot Measure 98 funding have included:

- The purchase of heavy equipment simulators and the start of heavy equipment operation and maintenance courses.
- Construction of a state-of-the-art controlled environment agricultural building.
- Creation of a staffed college and career center, known as the Future Center.
- Implemented a biweekly advisory program for guidance and character education.
- Implemented career and technical courses at BTI for

agriculture and construction pathways.

- Implemented a Freshmen Success Team to support struggling ninth-graders.

At Baker Middle School, an introduction to agricultural leadership class was added along with an additional FFA instructor and agricultural science classes. Introductory programs for the horticulture/plant science, forestry/natural resources and animal science pathways also were developed, Flanagan said.

An introduction to construction program including safety and proper use of tools, and lessons on the concepts and skills used in planning, fabricating and finishing wood projects also were included. And students were introduced to career skills related to the building trades pathway.

Flanagan said the school, which receives \$48,000, about 15% of the District's total

funding, plans to expand into engineering, computer coding and move eighth-graders to the next level in the coming year.

Dalton said the hope is that by involving the middle school students in FFA and other programs, the transition to high school will be a bit easier for them.

And students will advance more quickly through the high school programs and complete more complex and higher-level courses by finishing the prerequisites in middle school.

Here is the budget for the continuation of the Baker School District's High School Success programs funded by ODE:

Graduation rate, access to college credits and dropout prevention

- The Renaissance program, aimed at improving school culture at BHS. It is

led by a team of teachers and students, who last summer attended a training in Orlando, Florida. A group will return this year to receive more training about how to help ensure that all students feel included in the activities, classes and programs at BHS. The final goal is to improve attendance and as a result, boost grade-point averages and graduation rates.

The cost of the training and conducting the class and activities throughout the year is \$25,000.

- College and career center Chromebooks, travel and supplies — \$5,000.
- Guidance personal learning plan Chromebooks — \$2,500.
- Future Center staffing and support — \$10,000.
- Testing fees — \$3,000.
- Virtual job shadow — \$2,500.
- Peer mediation — \$2,500.

- Staff training and collaboration — \$4,500.
- Graduation coach — \$80,500.
- Tuition, stipends, teacher training — \$7,500.
- College visitation — \$2,000

Those expenses total \$120,000, or 38% of the District's total Measure 98 funding.

Career and technical education

- Construction — \$3,000.
- Agriculture — \$36,851.
- Health sciences — \$1,000.
- Manufacturing — \$7,000.
- Computer science — \$52,154.
- Business — \$11,500.
- Career and technical education coordination — \$12,000.

Those expenses total \$123,505 or 39 percent of the District's total Ballot Measure 98 funding



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