

Local & State

OREGON LEGISLATURE

House to vote on bill ending one exemption for vaccination

■ Gov. Kate Brown said she would sign the bill ending philosophical exemption

By Sarah Zimmerman
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon House is set to vote on tougher rules for childhood vaccinations, after a key panel approved the measure Friday over the opposition of hundreds of parents.

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means voted 13-7 to make routine childhood vaccinations a condition of attending Oregon public schools unless a student has a doctor's note. The measure will now go to the House for full consideration.

The move comes as this year's national measles count is the highest it's been since 1994. Health officials initially declared the disease, which can be fatal, to be eradicated in 2000.

Oregon has some of the most relaxed vaccine laws in the country and is one of 14 states to allow families to opt-out of immunizations for personal, philosophical and religious beliefs. The state also has the highest kindergarten exemption rates in the nation at 7.6%.

Families could only claim

"While I do support a parent's right to choice, I think this issue is much bigger."

— **State Sen. James Manning Jr., who supports bill ending philosophical exemption to vaccination for attending public schools**

medical exemptions to vaccines under the proposed bill. Unvaccinated children would still be able to attend online school under the bill, but they could not go to in-person school-related activities.

At least 77 people have been diagnosed with measles as part of an outbreak in Oregon and Washington state. Nearly all of those infected were completely unvaccinated.

Washington state lawmakers voted Tuesday to remove parents' ability to claim a personal or philosophical exemption from vaccinating their children for measles, although medical and religious exemptions will remain.

Gov. Kate Brown expressed her support for the

Oregon bill, telling reporters Thursday that she's pleased the legislature is taking "a more proactive approach" than Washington state.

"I will be signing that bill," she said.

Many lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have been grappling with where to draw the line between public safety and individual rights as hundreds of parents flooded the capitol this week to voice their opposition. Committee members said their inboxes were flooded with at least 2,000 emails from the opposition before the Friday vote.

Stacey Black is a mother from Eugene who said she skipped work to attend the committee vote and showcase her opposition to the measure. She said that, for years, she has relied on non-medical exemptions for her son, who is now 14. She added that she's concerned about the safety of vaccines, stressing that it's her prerogative to make health decisions for her child.

"I care deeply about a parent's right to make medical

decisions for their children without being punished or penalized," she said.

But the vocal opposition didn't completely deter supporters, who maintained that science has shown again and again that vaccines are effective and safe. Proponents also say pockets of unvaccinated students contribute to the spread of measles and other preventable diseases.

Sen. James Manning Jr., a Democrat from Eugene, said that a recent measles outbreak at two Los Angeles universities added urgency for lawmakers to crack down on non-medical vaccine exemptions.

Nearly 300 students were quarantined Thursday at two major Southern California universities after health officials said they might have been exposed to measles. Manning called the incident "disturbing," saying that lawmakers need to act before more outbreaks occur.

"While I do support a parent's right to choice, I think this issue is much bigger," he said.

More gray whales becoming stranded

By Tom Banse
Northwest News Network

An unusually large number of gray whales are washing up dead on their northbound migration past the Oregon and Washington coasts this year. The peak stranding time for gray whales in the Pacific Northwest is normally April, May and June. But the federal agency NOAA Fisheries has already logged nine dead whales washed ashore in Washington and one in Oregon. That's on top of 21 strandings on California beaches since the beginning of the year.

There were a total of 25 dead gray whale strandings on the entire West Coast in all of 2018.

One 39-foot-long dead adult whale was found floating in Elliott Bay last week, right in

front of downtown Seattle.

"This is looking like it is going to be a big year for gray whale strandings," said Jessie Huggins, stranding coordinator for the Olympia-based Cascadia Research Collective.

Since February, Huggins has participated in necropsies of malnourished, mostly adult, gray whales on Whidbey Island and the Key Peninsula to Ocean Shores and Long Beach, Washington.

"We're seeing very thin whales with little to no food in their stomachs," Huggins said in an interview Wednesday. "This is kind of leading us to believe that this is an issue of nutritional stress with a few normal-type strandings mixed in."

Huggins said these whales

probably didn't get fat enough on their summer feeding grounds in Alaskan waters way back last year.

Responders in rain gear and elbow-high rubber gloves cut into the massive carcasses to examine the animals' fat reserves and internal organs. Multiple whales exhibited dry fibrous blubber. The responders noted ribcages and vertebra sticking out, measured healed scars and took tissue samples for later analysis for contaminants.

Despite the unusual number of dead whales found, NOAA Fisheries spokesman Michael Milstein said the overall population of gray whales is fine, "probably as big as it's ever been" in modern times.

Eastern Pacific gray whales were taken off the endangered species list in 1994. The population is now estimated at 27,000, which may be around the carrying capacity of their ocean territory.

"They've been coming back strong," Milstein said by telephone from Portland Wednesday.

Gray whale and humpback whale casualties from entanglement in commercial and tribal fishing gear have been a growing concern for federal officials, certain environmental groups and the fishing industry lately. None of the dead gray whales found this spring on Oregon and Washington beaches were entangled in fishing or crabbing lines, however.

TREASURE

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In Eugene, Robert Gambs earned a bachelor's degree in business administration. His diploma, dated 1952, was in one of the boxes Stokes brought back from Vancouver.

The family moved to Portland in 1955, where Robert Gambs worked for the 3M company in its copy machine division, and later as a management analyst for the state of Oregon under Gov. Tom McCall in the 1970s.

Dielman said he also found many photos Robert Gambs had taken, including some grisly scenes following traffic crashes, when he apparently

worked for the Continental Casualty company.

Jon Gambs said his father retired from his state job in the 1980s. He was buried in Wilamette National Cemetery in Portland.

As Dielman progressed through the boxes last week he found a number of large envelopes filled with photos of many Baker City businesses, school plays, graduations, conventions and many other places and events.

Among Robert Gambs' subjects is Leo Adler, the beloved Baker City philanthropist who,



Robert Gambs

upon his death Nov. 2, 1993, at age 98, bequeathed his \$20 million estate to Baker County in the form of grants for community projects, and college scholarships that have benefited hundreds of students.

In addition to a portrait of Adler, the Gambs Collection includes multiple photos of the storeroom for the magazine distribution business from which Adler earned his millions.

Dielman, who is a 1957 graduate of Baker High School,

also came across photos that provoked his own personal memories.

These include scenes from the murder of a woman, which happened around 1947 in a home in the 2300 block of Second Street. Dielman, who was 7 at the time, said he and a classmate, Katy Wagner, had heard about the crime and walked by the house.

While perusing the contents of one box he found photos of the murder victim, whose killer was never caught.

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 Saturday, 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."

Parent meeting to review health materials

The Baker School District will host a Parent Advisory Meeting on Tuesday, April 30 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to review health instructional materials currently being used for Grades 4-8. The meeting will be at the Baker School District office, 2090 Fourth St.

These materials were adopted by the Baker School Board in June 2018, and have been in use during the current school year. Parents of students entering Grades 4-8 are invited to come review the materials as well as curriculum maps. Assistant superintendent Betty Palmer and other staff members will be available to answer questions.

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.

Economic Development Council meeting

The Baker County Economic Development Council will meet Thursday, May 2 at 8 a.m. in the commission chambers at the Baker County Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

Rifle shooting competition Saturday

A 1,000-yard bench rest rifle match is set for Saturday, May 4 at the Powder River Sportsmen's Club's Virtue Flat Range about one mile east of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center off Highway 86.

Registration starts at 9 a.m., with the competition beginning at 10 a.m.

Entry fee is \$8 per rifle, plus \$2 for each additional 5-shot group, and \$2 to keep a target. Any rifle, with any type of sights, or scope, allowed. The course of fire is 5 shots within 7 minutes. More information is available by calling Steve Simons at 541-805-8030 or 541-963-4095.

FRIGID

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Until today, April's coldest day was the 25th, when the low was 25.

The average low for the final few days of the month is 32 degrees.

The average high temperature this April is also above average, but not by a large margin — 60.2 degrees, through the 28th, compared with an average of 58.5.

Despite a dry finish — there hasn't been any measurable rain at

the airport since April 20 — the month will end up slightly wetter than average.

The rainfall total is 0.84 of an inch, compared with an average of 0.80.

April was the third straight month with above-average precipitation at the airport.

The total for 2019 is 4.47 inches — 45% above average for the first four months of the year.

This is the soggiest start to a year since 1978, when the January-April total was 6.55 inches.

Weekly Specials April 29 - May 5

Monday	Meatloaf.....	\$8.95
Tuesday	Lasagna.....	\$8.95
Wednesday	Liver & Onions.....	\$8.95
Thursday	Chicken Fried Steak.....	\$9.95
Friday	All You Can Eat Mini Shrimp.....	\$9.95
	Steak & Shrimp.....	\$10.95
	Pan Fried Oysters	\$10.50
Saturday	NY Steak.....	\$13.95
Sunday	Baked Chicken.....	\$9.50/8.95 sr

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