

Eastern Oregon University graduation back to normal after COVID-19 hiatus

BY DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — After a three-year hiatus, the Eastern Oregon University commencement ceremony will return to its normal routine.

The graduation ceremony will take place at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, June 11, at the university's football field at Community Stadium — following two years of altered ceremonies due to COVID-19 and the field's turf replacement in 2019, commencement will now be back to a standard format.

This year's graduation marks the university's 92nd commencement ceremony. EOU anticipates awarding up to 675 degrees and certificates this academic year, with more than 300 undergraduate and master's students set to walk across the stage. All who finished their courses in the summer of 2021, fall of 2021 or winter or 2022 are invited to participate in the spring commencement ceremony.

The last two years the COVID-19 pandemic altered Eastern's graduation plans,



Eastern Oregon University students prepare to receive their diplomas during an outdoor commencement on the La Grande campus in 2017.

with the university turning to virtual gatherings and drive-thru ceremonies.

Last year, Eastern graduates packed their cars with family members and received their diplomas from EOU President Thomas Insko on the west

side of campus. The brigade of cars, many clad with balloons and decorations, included 2020 graduates who did not have a chance to receive their diploma in person the previous year.

In 2019, Eastern gradu-

ates did not experience the packed football stadium and extra seating typical of a regular year's commencement because the university was replacing the football field turf, a project that helped Eastern continue to serve as a hub for

If You Go

OHSU annual convention and awards ceremony: 8:30 a.m., June 10
EOU student awards assembly: 1:30 p.m., June 10
Master's hooding ceremony: 8:45 a.m., June 11
General commencement: 9:30 a.m., June 11

numerous collegiate and high school athletic events.

According to the university's registrar, the 2022 commencement team and university officials are still in the process of monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic trends if any potential restrictions or attendance routines need to be adjusted.

The in-person event is open to the public. Seating is available on a first-come-first-served basis with ADA seating directly on the field. Viewers can also tune in to a livestream at the following link, youtube.com/user/EOUAV.

Other commencement activities are planned for Friday,

June 10: the Oregon Health and Science University will hold its annual convention and awards ceremony at 8:30 a.m.; the Eastern student awards assembly begins at 1:30 p.m.; and a special celebration for online and onsite students is at 6:30 p.m.

In addition, prior to the main commencement on June 11, there will be a hooding ceremony for master's graduates at Gilbert Plaza at 8:45 a.m.

With the commencement ceremony back in its standard form on the Eastern football field, the university is planning accordingly for a large crowd.

ADA assistance will be provided to transport individuals to and from farther parking lots. All regular campus parking spaces will be free for public usage.

During the ceremony, refreshments will be provided at the stadium's concession stand.

No photos will be allowed on the field, as a professional photographer will be present to take photos of each graduate — photos are allowed from the stands area.

Oregon ballot fiasco highlights the 'invisible' election chiefs

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS AND SARA CLINE
Associated Press

OREGON CITY — Voters in an Oregon county where a ballot-printing error delayed primary results for nearly two weeks have elected the same county clerk five times in the past 20 years despite missteps that impacted two previous elections and cost taxpayers at least \$100,000.

Opponents have repeatedly tried to unseat Clackamas County Clerk Sherry Hall, who was first elected in 2002, following elections errors in 2004, 2010 and 2011 and a state vote-tampering investigation in 2012.

Hall makes \$112,600 a year in the nonpartisan position overseeing elections, recording property transactions, keeping public records and issuing marriage licenses. She is running for a sixth four-year term in November in the suburban county south of Portland, and is being challenged by a former librarian who works in the elections department of Oregon's largest county.

The latest scandal in Oregon comes against the backdrop of a polarized political landscape in which vote counts are increasingly scrutinized. Races for local elections clerks — who until recently toiled in obscurity and relative anonymity — are getting new attention, particularly from right-wing voters who deny that President Joe Biden won the 2020 election.

Local elections chiefs are the first line of defense for elections integrity, but most voters don't know who their county clerk is, or even what they do, and are likely to skip over the nonpartisan race on Election Day, or simply pick the incumbent. Some county clerks are appointed, but in many counties in Oregon and elsewhere they are beholden to the whims of voters who may not be paying

attention, said Christopher McKnight Nichols, an associate professor of history at Oregon State University.

There's a "myopia and invisibility about this sort of office in American public life," he said.

The situation in Oregon's third-largest county underscores the importance of such contests.

In the current election, tens of thousands of ballots sent out with blurry barcodes were rejected by a vote-counting machine. The issue affected Democratic and nonpartisan ballots more than Republican ones, state officials have said. The fiasco forced the county to shift nearly 200 county employees to vote tabulation duties; county officials don't yet know the full cost of the cleanup job.

For days, workers have been transferring each voter's intent from spoiled ballots to fresh ones, by hand using purple markers, in a painstaking process that might not be complete for more than two more weeks. More than 81,000 ballots out of more than 116,000 had been counted by early Friday, and nearly 35,000 spoiled ballots remained to be duplicated, according to county tallies.

The outcome of the Democratic primary for Oregon's 5th Congressional District — a close race between a seven-term centrist incumbent and a progressive challenger — was delayed more than a week by the blunder. The AP called the race for challenger Jamie McLeod-Skinner on Friday.

The results of several other contests remained undecided as the county struggled to meet daily vote-counting benchmarks laid out in a corrective plan submitted to the state.

"This affects all of us. This is voter integrity," said Janet Bailey, a Republican voter who protested outside the Clackamas County election offices Thursday

with about a dozen others. "We, in Oregon, a week ago we had our primary, and we still don't know the results."

Hall knew of the problem with the ballots on May 3, but did not take significant action until after the election on May 17, when it became clear the vote tally was substantially delayed. The Oregon Secretary of State has said Hall refused offers of help from the state; at least one Democratic state lawmaker has demanded a legislative inquiry into the ballot fiasco.

Some voters seized on the county's problems to demand an end to Oregon's trailblazing vote-by-mail system and the use of electronic machinery to count votes.

"Our votes have to count," said Cindy Hise, a Clackamas County voter who wants the entire primary redone. "This has been going on for days. We're past all hope of it being a true vote."

Hall declined a phone or in-person interview with The Associated Press for this story but said in response to emailed questions Thursday that she would cooperate with any investigation. She said she has no comment on calls from some for her resignation.

She also addressed numerous 2020 contributions she made to national Republican causes, saying in a brief email that she "maintains neutrality." The donations to the National Republican Senatorial Committee and to WINRED, a Republican Party fundraising platform, were all \$100 or less.

"I have the right as a private citizen to exercise free speech and association. I do give small contributions to a large number of organizations," she wrote. "I do not accept endorsements of any kind."

Controversy isn't new to Hall, who has overseen the county's elections since she took office in 2003.



Dave Killen/The Oregonian

Rev. Anthony Lathan, center, speaks as Lift Every Voice Oregon held a press conference at Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland on Thursday, May 26, 2022. A series of speakers mourned the victims of the recent mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and called for action to get Initiative Petition 17, an act intended to reduce gun violence, on the November ballot in Oregon.

Guns

Continued from Page A2

have the job," Wyden's statement said.

In an email Thursday, Wyden said he is pushing to pass gun reforms such as mandating universal background checks, banning the sale of guns to anyone under 21, and preventing domestic violence abusers and stalkers from obtaining guns.

The Rev. Anthony Lathan, a mental health counselor and a veteran, said the standard weapon during his 12 years in the military was an M16 rifle, which can fire 20 rounds. The shooter in Texas used a 30-round magazine, "10 more rounds than someone who's fighting to protect our country," Lathan said.

"This man legally purchased a magazine and the bullets that were designed to do one thing — to cause maximum harm, to commit maximum pain," he said. "Fifty senators and multiple governors have blood on their hands because of their inaction."

Revs. Andrea Cano and Linda Jaramillo both spoke in Spanish as they addressed the crowd of about 30 people inside the church, referencing the pain the Texas mass shooting inflicted upon Latino communities throughout the country. "Weapons of war do not

belong in our homes, in our schools, on our streets, nor in our communities that are in our state," said Jaramillo, who is the former president of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. "We must lift every voice and say, 'No more.' 'Ya no mas.'"

Cano, who is interim president of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, approached the podium dressed in black as a symbol of her mourning.

"La profunda tristeza nos está tomando — that deep grief is just crushing us," Cano said. "I ask — implore — not only the Latino community throughout Oregon but all our communities to fill out these petitions as soon as possible ... If we don't sign those signatures we are complicit."

Community elder Antoinette Edwards and her husband, Keith Edwards, took a moment to say the names of each child and teacher killed Tuesday in Uvalde, Texas. With every name, Antoinette placed a single red rose one by one into a large glass jar.

"It is our job to make every politician uncomfortable. Make it inconvenient for them until they do something to save our children," Keith Edwards said after the jar had been filled. "We must do this civilly, we must do this peacefully, but we must make them uncomfortable — now and until they do the right thing."

OPEC

Continued from Page A1

"We are very excited about the third year of this incredible partnership between OTEC and Eastern Oregon University," said Lea Hoover, OTEC's director of member and strategic services. "By allocating four of our scholarships to this program and leveraging a matched investment from EOU we can invest

into our local communities directly, support local students and return value to OTEC member-owners through the internship projects that the students will complete throughout their four years at EOU."

The four recipients of the OTEC-EOU Rural Scholarship:

- Maya Smith, Baker Early College
- Lauryn Pettyjohn, Grant Union High School

- Braden Carson, La Grande High School
- Ethan Peasley, Burns High School

Applicants for scholarships must be an active OTEC member or a dependent or tenant of an OTEC member to be eligible for scholarships. Scholarships are funded from unclaimed capital credits.

"We congratulate all the 2022 scholarship recipients and are proud to reward the students for their academic

success and dedication to their community," said Joe Hathaway, OTEC's communications manager.

Baker County scholarship recipients include:

- Graduating high school seniors: Savannah Brown, Sydney Lamb, Gavin Stone, all from Baker High School.
- Returning college students: Jayme Ramos, Eastern Oregon University; Cheyenne Thamert, Central Oregon Community College.

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This is an outdoor camp with horseback riding and outdoor adventure for boys and girls ages 12-15 years old.

Cost is \$2.00 (that's right only \$2.00 dollars)

June 25-26, 2022

For more information, questions or an application please call Jodie Radabaugh at 541-524-9358 or 541-403-4933

All state and county regulations will be followed.

The Nurses and Techs at Saint Alphonsus Baker City would like to say THANK YOU and show our support to the Baker City Fire Department's First Responders for the work they do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in our community. Thank you from the Oregon Nurses Association of Saint Alphonsus Baker City.

Remember, these brave men and women not only respond to fires and emergency medical calls they also provide many other invaluable services to Baker City and surrounding areas including:

- "Stop the Bleed" campaign
- FREE Blood Pressure checks at the Community Center
- EMT Preceptors
- School Education
- Fire Inspections
- Community Basic Life Support (CPR) and First Responder Courses
- Rural Fire Department Training

Thank you for ALL you do to keep us Safe

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