



Bend's Rafael Nelson is racing in the 7-day dog sled race across western Wyoming **EXPLORE, B1**



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Oregon House Republicans reject party statement

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon House Republicans disowned an official Oregon Republican Party claim that the riot at the U.S. Capitol was a “false flag” operation by Democrats to politically damage then-President Donald Trump.

A two-page screed featured a “resolution” calling 10 Republicans who voted for the impeachment of President Trump “traitors.” It claimed the mob of Trump supporters who

smashed their way into the U.S. Capitol in a riot that left five dead and 140 police officers injured was a Democratic conspiracy to set-off the “sham” impeachment. The episode was likened to the 1933 burning of the German Reichstag in Berlin by Nazis, who then blamed the fire on others. They called for a “patriot network” to advance their claims.

“Democrats and their enablers are trying to falsely assign blame to the peaceful protesters present that day,”

the state GOP said.

The hyperbolic language, embrace of dark conspiracies, and invocation of Nazism was an inflammatory brew quickly picked up by the Washington Post, CNN, and Britain’s Guardian newspaper. Twitter and Facebook spread the story around the globe.

In an extraordinarily swift and unanimous rebuke, the 23 members of the House Republican caucus signed a letter rejecting the Oregon Republican Party’s official statement.

“There is no credible evidence to support false flag claims,” the letter said. “Oregon is in crisis. Vaccines are not going to our most vulnerable, our students are still not in a safe classroom setting, main street businesses are in a tailspin, our health data is a mess and here we are, talking about a political party resolution.”

It wasn’t the first time lawmakers had to respond, dismiss or explain some action of a state political party whose decades-long political right-

turn had outpaced even its growingly conservative state representatives. As the party’s size and influence has declined, the tension between those who carry the GOP banner outside and those inside the Capitol trying to influence policy has stretched nearer to a breaking point.

The lawmakers’ letter didn’t mention the House members or Trump’s debunked claim that the election was stolen by President Joe Biden.

See **Republicans** / A6

GRACEFUL GLIDING



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Sara Foran, 15, a member of the Bend Ice Figure Skating Club, glides across the ice while spending the afternoon practicing tricks during an open skate session at The Pavilion in Bend on Thursday. For more information about skate times, prices and contact information for the local ice skating rinks, please see the **Explore events calendar** in today’s paper. » **See B2**

Deschutes County jail death determined a suicide

Criminal investigation into Baksis, 31, closed

BY GARRETT ANDREWS

The Bulletin

The law enforcement investigation into an inmate’s death last month in the Deschutes County jail has concluded that Scott Douglas Baksis took his own life.

An autopsy report for Baksis, 31, has not yet been released and thus there’s no formal cause of death yet.

But on Thursday, Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel issued a statement declaring the manner of death a suicide and the criminal probe closed.

“Regardless of the cause of death, this was a non-criminal incident,” Hummel wrote.

Baksis, originally from Lake Oswego but living in Bend at the time of his arrest, was pulled over Oct. 23 near downtown Bend and arrested for allegedly driving with a blood-alcohol level twice the legal limit. Due

to two prior DUII convictions and his alleged high blood-alcohol level, he was charged in circuit court with felony DUII, as well as driving with a suspended license.

Baksis attended an arraignment hearing Dec. 1 and was remanded into custody with his security set at \$20,000, meaning he needed to pay \$2,000 to be released.

Deputies approached him in the courtroom, and he reportedly told them he was suffering from a panic attack. They saw him place a pill in

his mouth, telling them it was prescription anti-anxiety medication, Hummel wrote.

“One of the deputies noted that Mr. Baksis expressed anxiety about an upcoming job interview that he did not want to miss,” Hummel wrote.

When he was booked into the jail, Baksis was asked questions about his mental health, including if he had thoughts of harming himself, as part of the jail’s standard intake process.

See **Jail death** / A6

COVID-19

Brown redirects vaccines to Portland

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown on Thursday ordered 32,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines redirected to the Portland area instead of going to other parts of the state.

The move came after news reports that health care workers in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties were unable to be vaccinated because of a shortage of doses.

At the same time, other counties were inoculating groups further down the priority list because of excess doses on hand.

“Health care workers and Phase 1a individuals across the state have always been my top priority for vaccination,” Brown said.

The Portland area would receive 17,000 additional shots for health care workers and 15,000 for teachers and school staff.

See **Redirected** / A6

Proposal aims to keep police mug shots under wraps

BY GARRETT ANDREWS

The Bulletin

Among a large slate of criminal justice bills this year at the Capitol is a proposal that would make police mug shots largely unavailable to the public until a person is convicted of a crime.

The proposed bill, introduced by Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, addresses the negative impacts that can arise after the release of an arrest booking photo, especially people who were arrested but never convicted of a crime.

The proposal, which is still being drafted, was briefly discussed Monday in a video hearing of the Subcommittee on Equitable Policing.

See **Mug shots** / A6

TODAY'S WEATHER



Periods of clouds
 High 44, Low 29
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