

# Ousted Rep. Nearman publishes website on lawmakers

BY ZANE SPARLING

Pamplin Media Group

Expelled state Rep. Mike Nearman has been in the news plenty this year.

Turns out, he wants to write it, too.

The Independence-based Republican has been quietly publishing the web-only Northwest Observer since July of last year.

With roughly 1,000 followers each on Facebook and Twitter, it's not a general circulation news source for the state. But it's certainly attracted the attention of those refreshing the #Orpol and #Orleg internet hashtags that insiders use to track the back and forth in Salem.



Oregon Capital Insider, file

**Former state Rep. Mike Nearman was the state director of the anti-union group Freedom Foundation in 2019.**

State Rep. Karin Power, D-Milwaukie, first noted that state business records listed her then-colleague as the owner of the Observer, prompting Nearman to publish a one-off describing the website as "outed" and admitting he does some

writing for the site. The Observer doesn't have a staff page listing that information elsewhere.

Exactly how often Nearman turns his pen on state lawmakers depends on who you ask. Observer contributor Donna

Bleiler said Nearman writes "most" of the articles with the anonymous byline "staff reports," which populate much of the site's daily coverage.

"I'm sure others have written a few, too. But I think Mike is the only one that can tell you for sure," said Bleiler, who has written about 200 articles for the site on an unpaid basis.

But associate editor Ben Fisher described Nearman as an "occasional" writer for the site and downplayed his significance.

"Everybody — they try to focus on who's writing. I think what's more important is our content, rather than who it might be," he said. "By all means it's not just him or only

him. I'm largely responsible for it."

Fisher said the site — which was built by Nearman, a former computer programmer — isn't a money-making venture, describing it as a calling. The 42-year-old said anonymity was necessary due to safety concerns.

"You won't see my name on a lot of articles. I've been a target. I've gotten some masked phone calls from antifa," said Fisher.

"We put a conservative view to the facts the same as the left does putting their spin on facts," added Bleiler. "We are all volunteers."

Nearman first took office in 2014. He came to interna-

tional attention for opening a side door of the Oregon State Capitol during a special session on Dec. 21 — spurring a scuffle between armed protesters and state troopers enforcing a COVID-related closure of the building. He now faces criminal charges in the matter.

In a first for Oregon history, state lawmakers voted 59-1 to expel Nearman in June, though he could be back sooner than later. According to Oregon Public Broadcasting, Nearman has filed paperwork indicating his willingness to be appointed to his old seat, though it's unclear if Republican party precinct officials and local county commissioners are actually willing to give him the nod.

## Bonds

Continued from A1

A state study showed that nearly half of all public university buildings are over three decades old, with the average age hitting 34 years. In addition to specific projects, the bonds will be used to pay for \$80,810,000 in general maintenance and repairs across the state university system, including improving access for the disabled and updating systems to meet modern use and safety codes.

All cost figures for projects include debt service and sales costs connected to the bonds. The funding now heads to the House and Senate for approval.

### Oregon State University-Cascades, Bend

#### Student Success Center, \$14,035,000

The Bend campus of Oregon State University will use the funds to create a modern-version of a student union. Campus leaders see it as a place to meet, learn and seek services. Plans call for academic advising, career coaching, tutoring, counseling, a wellness center and space for students to hold group meetings or study. A state study shows the campus currently has just slightly more than 50% of the 28,000 square feet of "academic support space" it needs. The desire for a centerpiece of the new campus led students to levy an extra charge to their fees to finance an additional \$500,000 of spending on the facility.

### Oregon State University, Corvallis

#### Reser Stadium, \$40,555,000

The football stadium for the Oregon State Beavers will get a new west grandstand. It will include new seating, enclosures, restrooms, concessions, press boxes and athletic training and storage spaces. Around the stadium will be new parking, walkways and lanes for vehicles, including fire lanes. The plan may include interior facilities for academics or a health care facility.

#### Cordley Hall, \$87,065,000

The 1950s-era building houses the school's Integrative Biology and Botany and Plant Pathology program with students and their research having a worldwide impact. The 235,000-square-foot building is the site of classes for about 60% of all students on the Corvallis campus. The renovation will include environmentally and economically advanced heating, cooling and electrical systems. The overhaul will transform classrooms, laboratories and faculty offices. Seismic upgrades will be made to better withstand large earthquakes that were relatively unknown in the area before major research into the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

### Eastern Oregon University, La Grande

#### Inlow Hall, \$18,520,000

The bonds will finance renovations that maintain the historic integrity of the first building on campus while giving the landmark a new life for future generations of students. The complete overhaul will improve entrances for better access for all students and safe

exit in the event of an emergency. Modernized electrical and mechanical systems will allow more interior space for classrooms, hallways and offices. Hardware and software upgrades will allow classrooms to use 21st-century technology and enhance the experience of students who take part in distance learning. The Rural Engagement and Vitality Center will offer enhanced programs, while the renovated spaces will improve admissions, advising and student services.

### Portland State University, Portland

#### Gateway Center, \$68,990,000

The existing Art Building would be renovated, with space on an adjacent lot used to expand the School of Art and Design, the Center for Student Health and Counseling, and the Speech and Hearing Sciences program areas. Classrooms, laboratories, study and meeting spaces would receive upgrades. The building will be designed to include business or commercial space.

### University of Oregon, Eugene

#### University Hall (formerly Deady Hall), \$58,245,000

One of Oregon's rare sites on the National Register of Historic Places will be given a preservationist-driven overhaul that will include classrooms, offices and a theater. While retaining the look of the university's longstanding place in Oregon history, the 7,000 students and 115 faculty members who use its classroom and offices will work and study in a

safer, improved interior space. Building materials and electrical systems will be updated to meet current safety codes. Classrooms will be modernized and include computer workstations.

### Western Oregon University, Monmouth

#### Student Success Center, \$21,615,000

The existing Old Education Building would be demolished and replaced by a new facility to house student services. The center would offer modernized environments for advising, tutoring, support group activity, computer labs and study space.

### Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls

#### \$55,650,000

Funds will build a new residence hall for 900 students, including sleeping and study space.

### Oregon Institute of Technology/Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center, Scappoose

#### \$5,105,000

Bonds would pay for two new labs within the Research and Development facility, including a powdered metal handling vault and airlock to support the addition of laser powder bed fusion and binder jetting methods of additive manufacturing. Office space, conference rooms and other spaces will allow partnering with university researchers from other locations to develop new additive manufacturing projects.

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## Judges

Continued from A1

"It's about time," Adair said. "We haven't approved a new judge since 2003 and our population has expanded by around 40,000. We hope to add new programs, such as expanded programs for veterans. This is something we've been working on for three years."

Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel was likewise pleased.

"This is great news," Hummel said. "We're glad we're one step closer to achieving the result we've been working a decade to achieve. ... This is good for victims of crime, people suspected of crime, witnesses, defense attorneys, prosecutors, civil attorneys, judges. It's good for Deschutes County. It's about time."

House Bill 3011 amended the state statute on the number of judges in each judicial district: "The eleventh judicial district consists of Deschutes County and has [seven] nine judges."

The bracketed word is the current number and the number after that is the revised number of judges.

The Legislature also has to approve funding for the two judges. That was included in House Bill 5006, the annual budget reconciliation bill. Its traditional nickname in the Legislature is "The Christmas Tree Bill," as it is full of tar-

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— Patti Adair, Deschutes County commissioner

geted spending in House and Senate districts, usually requested by lawmakers.

The bill allocated \$721,500 from the state's general fund for two new circuit court judgeships.

The judgeships would begin Jan. 1, 2022.

The subcommittee approved \$867,280 in the general fund for six permanent full-time positions, including one judicial assistant, one courtroom clerk, and one back-office clerk for each newly established judgeship. Judicial staff would begin on Nov. 1, 2021.

The bill says the Deschutes County government will assume facility (courtroom and office space) and associated costs for the judges and staff.

The subcommittee that approved the judgeships includes the House Speaker and Senate President, as well as the top two Republican leaders in the Legislature, two chairs from the full Ways & Means Committee, and Republican vice-chairs of the full committee.

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## Heat

Continued from A1

The heat wave will affect the entire Northwest, where some areas, such as Pendleton and Portland, are expected to reach 110 degrees.

The cause of the heat?

"A strong high pressure system will build over the Pacific Northwest through the weekend and into next week," Brooks said. "Sinking air under the high pressure will result in very hot temperatures."

Excessive heat can be deadly, and extra precautions need to be taken to avoid heat illness, according to the weather service excessive heat warning, which was issued Thursday.

"Pay attention to safety," Brooks said. "Drink water way before you decide to go out and do stuff. Don't drink any alcohol or caffeine if you're going to go outside and be active. Take lots of breaks. Try to avoid heavy labor in the afternoons."

It is also important to ensure the safety of pets during excessive heat. Leaving pets in hot cars or houses can lead to heat stroke and even death, and scorching asphalt and truck beds can burn their paws, the Humane Society of Central Oregon said in a press release. To ensure their safety, pets should be left in cool environments, given lots of water and should only be taken out for exercise in the morning and at night.

### Conserving energy

A weather-related power outage during the heat wave is unlikely, said Tom Gauntt, a spokesperson for Pacific

Power. But there are ways to conserve energy during a heat wave as air conditioning uses rises.

Gauntt recommended keeping the air conditioning on throughout the afternoon, because cooling an excessively hot house takes more energy than keeping it cool throughout the day. He also recommends delaying oven, washer and other utility use during the hottest days this weekend.

"It might not be the greatest time to bake a bunch of brownies," he said.

Lastly, he recommends covering the windows during the afternoons and opening them in the evenings.

"Things are a little different in the high desert where it tends to cool off at night," he said. "That becomes pretty relative when you're talking triple digits, but when the evening comes and you do get that breeze, then you can open things up."

Temperatures are expected to drop to the 70s and 60s each night this week in Central Oregon.

### Resources

For people experiencing homelessness, excessive heat can be life-threatening, especially if they have no access to water or a place to cool down.

The upcoming heat wave prompted the city of Bend, Deschutes County, the Homelessness Leadership Coalition, the First Presbyterian Church of Bend, Shepherd's House Ministries and Family Kitchen to provide cooling centers for the homeless.

Between Saturday and July 4, the First Presbyterian Church of Bend will operate

on weekends and Shepard's House Ministries will operate on weekdays as cooling centers from noon to 5 p.m. Family Kitchen will provide free lunches.

Two cooling shelters will open in Redmond. Redmond Collective Action will open a shelter at NE 17th Street and Greenwood Avenue from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday and 2 to 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. The Redmond Service Providers will have one available and open to pets at Mountain View Fellowship on Monday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m. Transportation will be available through Dial-a-Ride.

A cooling shelter also will open in Madras starting Saturday. The shelter will be available daily until July 4 from noon to 5 p.m. at the Madras Free Methodist Church, 976 S. Adams St. Transportation will be available at Fourth and Maple streets at 11:45 a.m. Pets welcome.

According to David Notari, director of development with Shepherd's House Ministries, water and other needed supplies will be available to the homeless and others needing assistance.

"We're doing everything we can to make sure we have what's needed for those who access our services, whether they spend the night or they're just in the area," Notari said. "We will make available for those who come to us, and even those who don't spend the night, any extra water they need or shelter supplies."

If temperatures rise slightly above expectations, it will be a record breaking year for Cen-

tral Oregon.

The all-time high recorded in Central Oregon was 108 on Aug. 7, 1970. The all-time high for June was 102 on June 26, 2017, followed closely by 101 on June 28, 2015, according to Brooks.

The hottest day on record for Bend is 106 on Aug. 1, 1916, according to the weather service.

"This is one of the hotter Junes we've ever seen," Brooks said. "It could definitely break the June record."

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