

Community **HEALTH BEAT**

Quality Healthcare Close To Home

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Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

As a General Surgeon, a large part of my practice deals with Colorectal Cancer (CRC) screening and treatment. Did you know that among cancers that affect both men and women, CRC is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death in the United States? More than 140,000 Americans are diagnosed with the disease every year and more than 50,000 of them are expected to die this year. This translates into a lifetime risk of about 1 in 20 for the average person, and can be 2 to 3 times higher if you have a family history of colon cancer or polyps.

Fortunately, over 90% of these cancers and deaths could be prevented. Despite its high incidence, CRC is one of the most easily detected and successfully treated forms of cancer, especially when found early. In the past decade, CRC rates have decreased by 3% every year. This can be directly attributed to the increased use of colonoscopy, the "Gold Standard" tool used for CRC screening. Colonoscopy uses a long, thin, flexible fiber optic tube

attached to a video camera to evaluate the lining of the colon (large intestine) and rectum. It is done under sedation, and if any abnormalities are found, surgical instruments can be passed through the "scope" to painlessly sample and usually remove the growths, or polyps. These polyps start as non-cancerous, benign tumors, but over time have the potential to develop into cancer. Colonoscopy is therefore unlike any screening tool we have in medicine because it allows us to not only detect cancers, but also prevent future cancers. It also increases the likelihood that if cancer is found, it will be at an earlier stage when it is more likely to be cured.

The American Cancer Society, the American College of Surgeons and the American Society of Colorectal Surgeons all recommend starting colonoscopies at age 50 (younger for those at increased risk).

Unfortunately, only about 50% of patients over 50 years old are being screened. Since colon polyps occur in at least 20% of the adult population, and 90% of

those people are 50 years or older, this leaves a huge potential pool for cancers to occur.

When asked "what are the symptoms of CRC," I recite a long laundry list, including: change in bowel habits with constipation or diarrhea, narrowed stools, blood in the stool, abdominal pain or cramps, bloating, weight loss, weakness, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. But the first symptom is "No Symptoms at All". By the time symptoms occur, the cancer is less likely to be at an early state where a definitive cure is possible.

The bottom line is **Colonoscopies Save Lives**. So if you are 50 years old or older, get screened now. If you think you may be at higher than average risk (example: personal and family history of CRCs and polyps, or a history of Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis)) ask your doctor about getting screened early and schedule your colonoscopy. It might just save your life.

Keith J. Thomas, MD, FACS
Board-Certified General Surgeon
Blue Mountain Surgery

BLUE MOUNTAIN CARE CENTER Resident of the Month **RALPH WILSON**



William "Ralph" Wilson was born on August 25, 1933 to Jonathan "Pete" and Gladys Wilson in Baker City, Oregon. He was raised in Baker with four sisters and three brothers.

When he was 12 years old, Ralph worked for a

gardener who grew vegetables to sell to the stores in Baker, LaGrande and other places. One of Ralph's jobs was to mend lettuce crates among other tasks.

Ralph was also a Boy Scout and was patrol leader several different times. He had all the badges up to Life and had almost acquired that badge as well. Ralph used to go out and help some of the ranchers at haying time, or to help them drive the cattle out to summer

range. He also helped with branding.

The summer of his Junior year in high school, he went to work at the Bates mill. He had to lie about his age, as he was only 17. In the fall of that year, he quit his job at the mill and went back to school half days and started working for Montgomery Wards in Baker, helping with freight and window displays, later selling appliances. After graduation, he went to work at the mill at Pondsosa. Ralph was also a National Guardsman. Being one of very few men who could repair the M-1 Assault Rifle, he was in high demand.

In 1954, he married Joann Cox and they moved to Seattle, where Ralph worked for Boeing, making model airplanes that were used to test for larger aircraft. Ralph and Joann had two children, a son and a daughter. Ralph moved his family back to Grant County and worked for saw mills in the area, before eventually settling in Bates. He was a saw filer for over 35 years. He and Joann have been married for over 60 years.

Ralph has three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He enjoys playing cards, hunting, hiking, getting firewood and just being out in the woods in general. He also has a fantastic imagination and tells wonderful stories. Ralph came to the Blue Mountain Care Center on October 6, 2014.

The Strawberry Mountain Community Clinic SWCC is now open at 7:00 AM Mon.-Fri. as is Blue Mountain Hospital Registration, Lab, Radiology Department, and Physical Therapy Department.



Presents...

March Visiting Specialists

- 2nd - Dr. O'Hollaren - Bend Urology
- 3rd - Dr. Riddock, Bend Cardio
- 4th - Dr. Sandefur - Baker Ortho
- 9th - Dr. McLellan - Bend Cardio
- 9th - Korena Farris - Bend Neuro
- 10th - Dennis Sell - Bend Hearing
- 21st - Dr. Rushton - Baker Podiatrist
- 28th - Dr. Rushton - Baker Podiatrist
- 30th - Dr. McLellan - Bend Cardio

Minimum wage tax credit proposal on hold

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A legislative proposal to offset the cost of minimum wage increases to small businesses, farmers and other natural resources employers appears to be on hold until at least 2017.

Reps. Brian Clem, D-Salem, and John Davis, R-Wilsonville, had proposed giving tax credits to certain employers who are most likely to struggle financially to meet the requirements of a new three-tier minimum wage plan. The plan was laid out in Senate Bill 1532, which passed both legislative chambers earlier this month.

During negotiations with legislative leadership, the plan was whittled down to tax credits of no more than \$15 million a year only for employers involved in animal production, aquaculture, crop production, fishing, hunting, trapping and food manufacturing.

That amount was insufficient to cover the additional costs of all of those employers, so lawmakers would have had to find a way to prioritize how to divvy out the tax credits, Clem said.

A group of associations representing agriculture has indicated it wants lawmakers to take more time to figure out those details, rather than push through legislation this session, which is scheduled to end by Sunday.

"The reality is that more time is needed to fully run cost and benefit scenarios to ensure any wage relief actually benefits the agriculture industry as a whole," representatives from the agriculture industry wrote in a letter to Clem. "We believe there may only be one shot at alleviating the burden S.B. 1532 imposes on agriculture. The solution must meet the needs of our member families without picking winners and losers among the industry."

The letter was signed by the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Northwest Food Processors Association, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Blueberry Commission, Oregon Seed Council, Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association, Far West Agribusiness Association and Oregon Wheat Growers League.

Competing energy bills up for Senate vote

By Hillary Borrud
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Lawmakers in the Oregon Senate could on Wednesday vote on two competing bills to double the state's renewable energy mandate, thanks to maneuvers by Democrats and Republicans to either fast track or delay the legislation.

The controversial legislation, which is a top priority for utilities, environmental groups and Democrats in both chambers, could be among the last major policy proposals lawmakers vote on before the end of the short legislative session.

Both bills would require PacifiCorp and Portland General Electric to use sources such as solar and wind to serve 50 percent of their customers' energy demand by 2040. The bills would also require the two investor-owned utilities to stop using coal power to serve their Oregon customers.

However, there are also significant differences between the bills including caps on how much the utilities can raise rates each year to cover their costs, including a profit on new renewable energy facilities. The first bill, House Bill 4036, calls for the Oregon Public Utility Commission to adopt regulations that encourage competitive bidding and diverse ownership of renewable energy facilities, something not required under the second bill, Senate Bill 1547. That second bill also includes incentives to boost wood-burning power plants.

Senate Bill 1547 has more momentum, thanks to support from environmental groups and the two investor-owned utilities. Brad Reed, a spokesman for the politically active nonprofit Renew Oregon which represents environmental and renewable energy groups, said Senate Bill 1547 appears to have the clearest path forward. "And this bill enjoys support from clear majorities in both the House and Senate," Reed wrote in an email Monday afternoon.

Utility representatives have also said they dislike the 3 percent annual cap on renewable energy rate increases in the first bill, and they would prefer the 4 percent cap on renewable rate increases in the second bill. The utilities can request the renewable energy rate increases on top of broader periodic rate increases.

House lawmakers already voted 39-20 to pass House Bill 4036, in mid-February. After news reports that Gov. Kate Brown's administration had told public utility commissioners not to go public with their concerns about the bill, a Senate committee added language to the bill to

protect consumers and ensure utilities use competitive bidding to acquire cost-efficient new sources of renewable energy.

Next, Republicans in the Senate, who oppose the bill, brought it to a standstill by requesting that lawyers draft a minority report. There is no deadline to produce the report, so the move threatened to prevent the measure from coming to a vote before the end of the session.

Supporters of the bill, including Democrats in both chambers and Rep. Mark Johnson, R-Hood River, responded with a plan on Thursday to insert a new version of the renewable energy mandate legislation into a different bill, Senate Bill 1547, that had already passed in the Senate. Lawmakers negotiated that legislation in closed-door meetings with representatives of the utilities, environmental and renewable energy groups.

Although two representatives of the Public Utility Commission attended the negotiations, none of the public utility commissioners were involved nor did they testify last week when a House committee voted to insert the negotiated language into Senate Bill 1547. Members of the Public Utility Commission have said an earlier version of the legislation would be costly for consumers but do little to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from coal plants.

Many House Republicans also oppose the bill and they decided to try the same delay tactic as their Senate colleagues by requesting a minority report. However, it did not buy much time because of different rules in the House. The minority report would make several changes to Senate Bill 1547, including making it easier for cities to start new municipal utilities by giving them three years to meet the renewable energy mandate, according to House Republican Office communications director Preston Mann.

By Monday, Senate Republicans had decided to withdraw their minority report, allowing House Bill 4036 to be scheduled for a vote Wednesday.

Caitie Butler, communications director for the Oregon Senate Republicans, wrote in an email Monday that Republicans withdrew the request "because (House lawmakers) stripped most of the ratepayer protections out of the stuffed Senate bill ..." Butler wrote that Senate Republicans still do not support either bill. Senate Bill 1547 is scheduled for a House floor vote on Tuesday, which means it could also go to the Senate for a final up or down vote Wednesday. House Bill 4036 would have to go back to the House for a final up or down vote.