

Stakes are high for education reform

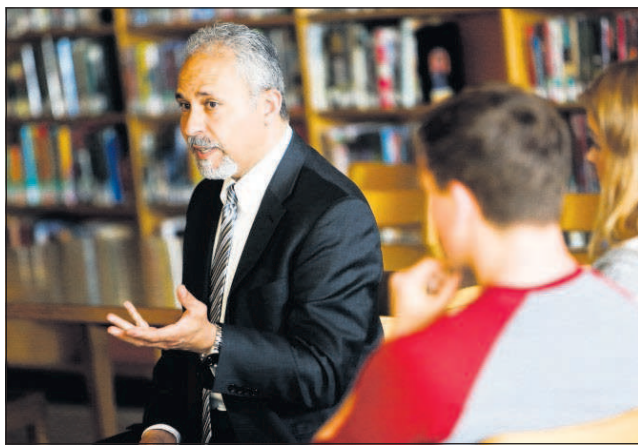
Oregon, other states, will get unprecedented leverage under new law

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

A change in federal education law will give Oregon and other states unprecedented leverage to decide on student assessments, accountability measures, school improvement and educator effectiveness.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act covering federal oversight of K-12 education, is being replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act, taking full effect in the 2017-18 school year.

The stakes are high in Oregon, which persistently faces some of the lowest graduation and highest chronic absenteeism rates



Danny Miller/EO Media Group

State Department of Education Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor asked Astoria High School students Thursday for feedback about their education experience.

in the nation.

As Oregon creates an education plan to turn in to the U.S. Department of Education in the fall, state Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Salam Noor, the highest educational official under Gov. Kate Brown, has been crisscrossing the state and asking locals to reimagine education.

Noor has been to 11 fo-

rums so far in Oregon and ended his tour Monday in Coos Bay.

So far, he said, he has heard a consistent focus on the need for student and teacher engagement, a variety of high-interest, hands-on programs and close relationships between students and faculty.

"We're hearing consistencies about the ... mental health needs of students,

and the social/emotional needs that have to be addressed," he said.

After the tour, Noor said the state will try to synthesize the information into themes to inform the education plan that education officials are drafting in July and August.

The state receives federal guidelines for its education plan in October, he said, and will turn in a final draft by November. While not all feedback will be reflected in the plan, he said, the information he's gathered at the forums will continually inform the state's work on education.

"It gives us a bigger picture and a broader perspective on what's actually needed and what's happening in schools and communities across the state," he said.

For more information or to suggest ideas, visit <http://tinyurl.com/j2r3xe2> or email ESSA.Oregon@state.or.us.

Supreme Court unanimously backs landowners in Clean Water Act case

By Mateusz Perkowski
EO Media Group

The U.S. Supreme Court Monday ruled unanimously that landowners can challenge a federal government determination that their property is subject to Clean Water Act restrictions.

With federal officials facing a new source of lawsuits, they must now do a better job justifying their conclusions, legal experts say.

"The cavalier attitude toward asserting authority under the Clean Water Act we hope will change," said Reed Hopper, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation, a public interest legal organization.

The nation's highest court rejected arguments by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that its "jurisdictional determinations" can't be challenged in court because they're merely advisory opinions that property is subject to the Clean Water Act.

The ruling is a victory for farmers and other landowners who would rather sue to prove their property doesn't fall under the agency's jurisdiction than seek costly Clean Water Act permits or abandon their projects.

The federal government argued that landowners are free to ignore a jurisdic-

tional determination and then fight the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency when defending against an enforcement action.

Chief Justice John Roberts, in his opinion for the court, dismissed the claim that landowners must expose themselves to sanctions to question the government's conclusions.

"Respondents need not assume such risks while waiting for EPA to 'drop the hammer' in order to have their day in court," Roberts said.

The practical effect is that federal agencies will need a solid scientific basis that private property has a "significant nexus" with waterways protected by the Clean Water Act, said Hopper, who argued the Supreme Court case on behalf of the Hawkes Co., which was blocked from extracting peat moss from its wetlands.

"The Corps is going to have to get its ducks in a row. It's going to have to provide data to support its decision that this is a water of the U.S.," he said.

In the Hawkes case, the government required the company to obtain a Clean Water Act permit because the wetland allegedly had a "significant nexus" with a river 120 miles away.

14 stock dogs poisoned with strychnine

By Sean Ellis
EO Media Group

CANYON COUNTY, Idaho — Fourteen stock and guard dogs have been poisoned with strychnine in southwestern Idaho since early April and 12 have died.

The poisoning of the dogs, which are used to guard and shepherd sheep and goats, has occurred over several weeks.

"We lost another dog today. The poisoning is still going on," the dogs' owner, Casey Echevarria, told EO Media Group May 30.

The dogs were intentionally poisoned with strychnine, said Dr. Brent Varriale, a Fruitland veterinarian who examined three of them. He said they had large amounts of green dyed grain in their stomachs, which is consistent with gopher bait that contains strychnine. The gopher bait was mixed with a significant amount of raw ground meat and the amount of bait found in each dog would have required mixing it with food to encourage the dogs to eat as much of it as they did, he said.

Varriale said he examines dogs that have consumed gopher bait and suffered

strychnine poisoning about once every few years and they never have that much of the bait in their stomachs.

The large number of Echevarria's dogs that have suffered strychnine poisoning this spring, coupled with the large amount of bait found in their stomachs, "tells me it was done intentionally," Varriale said.

Varriale saved and froze stomach content samples from each dog and contacted the Canyon County Sheriff's Department, which investigated the incidents but has not identified any suspects.

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