



The Blue Mountain EAGLE



Grant County's newspaper since 1868

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

152nd Year • No. 9 • 22 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com

GRATEFUL FOR BEING A JUDGE

Cramer reflects on past 23 years as only judge to be elected for 24th district



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Circuit Court Judge William D. Cramer Jr. shakes hands with Corrections Sgt. Wade Waddell at Cramer's retirement party on Jan. 2.

"WHEN I LEFT BURNS, THERE WERE TWO THINGS THAT I WASN'T GOING TO DO. I WAS NOT GOING TO BECOME AN ATTORNEY... AND I WAS NOT COMING BACK TO BURNS. AS I LEARNED SO OFTEN IN LIFE, NEVER SAY NEVER. AS I GOT OLDER, I REALLY APPRECIATED WHAT EASTERN OREGON HAS, AND I THINK ITS A GREAT PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY."

Judge William D. Cramer Jr.

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Since the 24th Judicial District was created 23 years ago, one judge has presided on the bench over Grant and Harney counties.

After more than two decades of service, Judge William D. Cramer Jr. has officially retired. Although he is still currently covering the two counties until a replacement is appointed or elected, his new role as a senior judge will take him on temporary assignments throughout the state.

Cramer never planned on returning to Eastern Oregon or becoming a judge, but the journey has given him valuable insights into rural courts and many positive memories along the way.

Becoming a judge

Before becoming a judge, Cramer worked as a general practice attorney for 15 years, practicing law with his father in Burns where he was born and raised. Cramer has lived in Eastern Oregon most of his life with the exception of going to college in Boston and then going to law school at the University of Oregon.

"When I left Burns, there were two things that I wasn't going to do. I was not going to become an attorney — because my dad was one, and everybody thought I would follow in his footsteps — and I was not coming back to Burns," Cramer said. "As I learned so often in life, never say never. As I got older, I really appreciated what Eastern Oregon has, and I think its a great place to raise a family."

See Judge, Page A12

Republicans walk out of both chambers over climate bill

By Claire Withycombe
Oregon Capital Bureau

A day after their counterparts in the Senate vacated the Capitol, Republican representatives brought the House to a halt Tuesday, skipping a daily session in protest of a controversial climate bill.

Their absence blocked the House from taking votes. If all Democrats are present, the House still needs at least two Republicans to act on bills.

A spokeswoman for the House Republicans, Tayleranne Gillespie, said she didn't know how long their



Sen. Lynn Findley

boycott would last and that she didn't know where any of them were.

House Republicans' absence could further jam up the already-uncertain session, which is facing a March 8

deadline.

On Monday, 11 of the 12 Senate Republicans left the Capitol to stop that chamber from acting on the climate change legislation, Senate Bill 1530, and repeated their no-show



Rep. Mark Owens

Tuesday. One Republican, Tim Knopp of Bend, has attended the Monday and Tuesday floor sessions.

Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, said in a statement Monday the emissions legislation will do more harm to families and small businesses than any other legislative proposal the state has seen.

"I refuse to allow the super-majority to abuse their positions of

power by steamrolling this legislation throughout without a fiscal analysis or economic impact statement of the bill," Findley said. "Not only is it unfair to our constituents for us to take such a significant vote without all the information we need, it's not wise policy making."

Other bills that lawmakers are considering — everything from flood relief money for the Umatilla Basin to money for more homeless shelters — could be delayed or scrapped entirely.

Republicans are pushing to refer the emissions legislation to voters.

The proposal aims to cut the state's greenhouse gas emissions through a mechanism known as cap and trade. It would impose new regulations that would make carbon-intensive energy sources more expensive.

"Oregon House Republicans are taking a stand, with working families, in opposing cap and trade and this rigged process," House Republican Leader Christine Drazan said in a statement. "We will continue to keep all lines of communication open. I call on Governor Brown

See Climate, Page A12

State changing approach to oversight of ag water quality enforcement

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Next year the Oregon Department of Agriculture will change its water quality enforcement process from a complaint-based approach to an active review of any property conditions that might lead to a lack of compliance with the state's agricultural water quality standards.

The ODA, the lead agency for regulating agricultural concerning water quality under the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act, has the authority to enforce administrative rules, and these rules apply to private property whose land is used for agricultural purposes.

Kyle Sullivan, district manager of the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District, said since 2003, enforcement of water quality con-



Roger Ediger



Kyle Sullivan

cerns has been complaint driven. Now, he said, ODA is proposing an alternative, known as the Strategic Implementation Area process.

Sullivan said the Strategic Implementation Area program selects specific watersheds within Grant County and will conduct field evaluations that use remote imagery to identify manure piles, bare ground or other potential hazards from farming operations.

ODA will consider the presence of livestock, cropping and other agricultural operations and how

close they are to bodies of water. The type of stream, field slope and other factors will be considered when identifying potential water quality concerns.

Strategic Implementation Areas are selected based on the ODA's statewide prioritization of watersheds near agricultural lands. This includes parameters of water quality, temperature, bacteria, nutrients and sediment. The criteria also takes into account Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's priorities for native fish recovery and input from stakeholders.

Soil and water conservation district board members said their input has not been taken into consideration by ODA.

"They made this plan without consulting the stakeholders, the landowners," board member Pat

Voigt said.

Board member Roger Ediger said, when the legislation was passed in 1993 to monitor water quality, the board worked closely with ODA. He said today that is not the case, and interest groups, along with DEQ, pressured the ODA to take an aggressive stance on water quality enforcement.

Ediger said the new approach will alienate private landowners from the conservation district and turn the district into regulators.

"We are not going to be the regulators," he said. "We are here to help people come into compliance."

Sullivan said the new approach is not grounded in the spirit in which the water quality legislation was written.

See Water, Page A12

