



County officials sworn in



Several new and returning elected officials were sworn into office earlier this week. Gus Peterson of Ione, pictured top left with county clerk Bobbi Childers, will take Roy Drago Jr.'s place as Morrow County Commissioner, Position 1. Morrow County Sheriff John Bowles (top right), Morrow County Treasurer Jaylene Papineau (bottom right) and Morrow County Clerk Bobbi Childers (bottom left with Morrow County Justice of the peace Glen Diehl) were all re-elected to their positions. -Contributed photos

New Oregon laws that took effect January

School Bus Safety Cameras (House Bill 4147)

Provisions: This legislation authorizes public schools to install cameras on school bus stop arms to record drivers who illegally pass stopped buses displaying flashing safety lights. Captured footage can be used by law enforcement to issue citations, with fines up to \$2,000 for violations. The law requires warning signs on buses equipped with such cameras.

Pros: Intended to increase student safety by deterring illegal passing of school buses, providing clear evidence for law enforcement and raising public awareness about traffic laws related to school buses.

Cons: Potential privacy concerns regarding surveillance, financial implications for school districts related to the installation and maintenance of camera systems and possible disputes over the accuracy of recorded violations.

Right to Repair (Senate Bill 1596)

Provisions: This law requires manufacturers of electronic devices, such as smartphones and household appliances, to provide consumers and independent repair shops with access to necessary parts, tools and service information. The goal is to facilitate repairs and extend the lifespan of electronic products. While the law is effective Jan.

1, 2025, enforcement will not begin until July 2027, allowing time for compliance.

Pros: Empowers consumers to repair their own devices, potentially reducing electronic waste, lowering repair costs and fostering a more sustainable environment.

Cons: Manufacturers have raised concerns about potential risks to device security and safety, protection of intellectual property, and the feasibility of providing comprehensive repair information to the public.

Education Plan for Immigrants (SB 1532)

Provisions: Directs the Oregon Department of Education to develop a statewide plan to address disparities in education for asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, regardless of immigration status.

Pros: Promotes Equity: Focuses on closing achievement gaps and providing tailored resources for immigrant students.

Supports Vulnerable Populations: Helps new arrivals integrate into the education system more effectively.

Encourages Inclusivity: Reinforces Oregon's commitment to diversity and equal educational opportunities.

Cons: Implementation Costs: Schools may need additional funding and staff to implement programs and hire bilingual teachers or

counselors.

Potential Backlash: Critics may oppose using public funds to support undocumented immigrants.

Administrative Complexity: Developing and managing these plans could create logistical challenges for districts.

Prescription Drug Cost Reduction (HB 4012)

Provisions: This legislation aims to make prescription medications more affordable by requiring insurers to count payments made by patients, including those from co-pay assistance programs, toward their out-of-pocket maximums. This change is designed to reduce the financial burden on individuals requiring essential medications.

Pros: Seeks to improve access to necessary medications by lowering out-of-pocket expenses for patients, thereby enhancing adherence to prescribed treatments and overall public health outcomes.

Cons: Insurers may adjust premium rates or modify cost-sharing structures to offset potential financial impacts, which could lead to higher overall insurance costs for consumers.

Agricultural Worker Overtime

Provisions: This law extends overtime pay eligibility to agricultural workers, requiring employers to pay overtime wages for hours worked beyond 48 in

a week. This change aligns agricultural labor standards with those of other industries, aiming to ensure fair compensation for extended work hours.

Pros: Promotes equitable labor practices by ensuring agricultural workers receive fair compensation for overtime, potentially improving worker satisfaction and retention in the agricultural sector.

Cons: Employers may face increased labor costs, which could impact the profitability of agricultural operations. There is also a possibility that employers might reduce workers' hours or hire additional part-time staff to avoid paying overtime, potentially affecting workers' total earnings.

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Town and Country nominations close Friday

The 2025 Town & Country Awards Banquet nominations close this Friday, Jan. 10.

Forms can be found at the Heppner Chamber of Commerce office, Market 87, Heppner City Hall or online at <https://heppner-chamber.com/our-events/town-country-awards-banquet/>.

Forms need to be re-

turned to the Chamber office or via email at heppner-chamber@gmail.com.

Dinner tickets for the event are \$30 and are on sale at the Chamber office, Market 87 and Heppner City Hall.

The event on Thursday, Feb. 6, starts at 6 p.m. with dinner prepared by Chef Alvin Liu, with a no-host bar by Broken Spoke.

DeSpain Pizza gets new owners



(L-R) David, Dakota, Madison, Aubrey, Tyler and Logan Rice. The Rice family has taken over ownership of DeSpain Pizza in Heppner. -Photo by Kamille Holtz

By Kamille Holtz

David and Dakota Rice, along with their children Tyler, Logan, Madison and Aubrey, are the new owners of DeSpain Pizza.

David has been part of the Heppner community since 2007, while Dakota moved to the area in 2009. Dakota, originally from Prosser, WA, shares, "He brought me to Heppner."

David's background includes more than 10 years of experience in the restaurant industry, both running and cooking for restaurants. He has also served the mental health community.

Dakota similarly dedicated nearly 10 years in the mental health field.

The Rice children attend school locally, and a key goal for David and Dakota is to allow more time with their family. As Dakota says, "We want to build

something that they can have when they're older."

Currently, the children are present behind the scenes but plan to be involved, working in the pizza shop as they get older.

David and Dakota had long thought of owning a restaurant. When they saw the for-sale post for DeSpain Pizza on Facebook, they made the quick, casual decision to purchase the business. They have kept the original menu for now but added a new creation by David: a traditional taco pizza, which has already become a favorite.

DeSpain Pizza is currently open Tuesday through Friday, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., and is closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays. There are plans to extend the hours as

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St. Pat's planning meeting this week

The Wee Bit O' Ireland St. Patrick's Day Celebration Committee will hold its next planning meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 8, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Willow

Street Innovation Hub, 188 W. Willow Street, Heppner.

Anyone interested in volunteering during the event should attend. This year's celebration dates will be March 13-16.



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