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OREGON LEGISLATURE HARASSMENT LAWSUIT

Settlement pays out \$1.1M to victims

**SARAH ZIMMERMAN
AND ANDREW SELSKY**
The Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature will pay \$1.1 million to eight victims of sexual harassment and hostile workplace behavior at the state Capitol under a settlement announced Tuesday by the state labor department.

House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney, both Democrats, issued a joint statement apologizing to

the “women who suffered harm during their time in the Capitol.”

Both were accused in an investigation launched by former Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian of not thoroughly addressing multiple allegations of sexual harassment by Sen. Jeff Kruse, a Republican from the timber town of Roseburg, who resigned last year but maintains his innocence.

In addition to the eight victims, a ninth, Sen.



Kruse

attorney’s fees and other out-of-pocket expenses. Gelser was the first to publicly accuse Kruse of misconduct, marking the #MeToo movement’s first impact in the Oregon State Capitol. She did

Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, will be paid \$26,612 by the Legislature for

not seek a larger settlement, saying she wanted to keep the focus on the other women.

Gelser said in an interview in her Senate office that the settlement “sends a really strong message to Oregonians and to people in this building that sexual harassment is a really big deal. This is a seven-figure settlement that impacts a lot of women, and that demonstrates that we have had a significant problem here.”

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, said she’s working hard with a bipartisan group of colleagues to enact recommendations of the Oregon Law Commission to “make the Capitol more inclusive, equitable and accountable.”

At one point, Burdick herself had seen Kruse wrap his arms around Gelser at her desk on the Senate floor and step inappropriately close to her, and reacted by

striding up to Kruse and saying: “Get your hands off Sen. Gelser.”

Before the settlement — one of the largest the Bureau of Labor and Industries has brokered — was announced, Courtney took a 10-day medical leave for a flare-up of thyroid eye disease. Spokeswoman Carol Currie said doctors warned the 75-year-old that his condition will worsen if

LAWSUIT, A8

CAMAS VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL



MICHAEL SULLIVAN/NEWS-REVIEW PHOTOS

Debbie Godfrey of Camas Valley visits with friends and neighbors during a community luncheon at Camas Valley Charter School on Tuesday. Although power has yet to be restored in the area, those living in areas that did have power were able to bring in hot food to be shared.

Powerless

As Camas Valley continues without electricity, school officials start to plan ahead

SANNE GODFREY
The News-Review

CAMAS VALLEY — In a cold, shadowy cafeteria, about 80 people associated with Camas Valley Charter School came together for soup, chili and camaraderie.

The power in Camas Valley went off during the first night of the snowstorm and has remained off for more than a week, leaving many to seek out the hot lunch at the school.

“We came to see some different faces and reconnect,” Kayla Wright said.

Her family has been living with relatives since Monday, coming back to their home in Camas Valley once a day to feed the cats, and hoping for the power to come back on.

“We need to have school as soon as possible,” Superintendent Patrick Lee said. Students at the charter have missed six days of

school so far.

One way the school hopes to get back some of the instructional time that was lost is by asking the Oregon Department of Education for an allowance to miss the Smarter Balanced tests.

“They say they value education over testing, so I’ll poke the bear and see if they really mean it,” Lee said. The Smarter Balanced test take nearly a week for each student to complete and are used as an assessment tool for educators and administrators.

Camas Valley Charter School typically has classes Monday through Thursday, but Friday classes will be added for March 15 and April 26. Lee is also hoping to come to an agreement with the teachers’ union to allow instruction on May 3 and May 17, days that were set aside for teacher in-service days.

Since the week lost at



Honor Sexton, 6, of Camas Valley grabs a snack with friends and neighbors during a community luncheon at Camas Valley Charter School on Tuesday. Although power has yet to be restored in the area, those living in areas that did have power were able to bring in hot food to be shared.

school was literacy week, those events have been rescheduled for the week of March 11.

“A lot of kids eat breakfast and lunch and I’m worried if they’re eating,” substitute teacher Treva

Wright-Quinn said.

Mary Bringhurst and Angela Hooker helped organize Tuesday’s luncheon and were able to get some donations from local businesses

CAMAS VALLEY, A8

Timelines for power restoration updated

MAX EGENER
The News-Review

The number of people without power in Douglas County hasn’t changed since Tuesday.

A week and a half after the biggest snowstorm in decades caused a system-wide outage, more than 4,700 people remain without power as of Wednesday morning, according to the Douglas Electric Cooperative online outage map.

But the utility has released more specific time estimates of when people should expect their power back.

The highest estimate is up to two and a half weeks in the Scottsburg and Upper Smith River areas, where Douglas Electric has three crews and nine trucks currently working to repair power lines and rebuild broken utility poles.

The estimate for Elkton and Curtain, where there are four crews and 12 trucks working, is up to two weeks.

In the Hogan Road, Umpqua and Tyee area, the estimate is up to one and a half weeks. Six crews and 18 trucks are working in the area.

The estimate in Scotts Valley,

UPDATE, A8

Fieldman talks life post-UCAN

The outgoing director has been with the organization for decades

CARISA CEGAVSKE
Senior Staff Writer
The News-Review

Mike Fieldman has made helping people his life’s work. For the past 20 years, he’s been doing that as the director of the United Community Action Network.

In February, he announced he will retire later this year.

Fieldman has been at UCAN’s helm for close to half its 50 years, and grown it from a \$5.5 million a year operation with about 90 employees to one with an annual budget ranging from \$17 million to \$21 million and an employee roster of more than 200. Under his watch, it extended services to Josephine County, too.

The food bank expanded, AmeriCorps volunteers were brought into

FIELDMAN, A8



INSIDE, A2
Eight girls compete for Distinguished Young Woman award

HIGH: 44
LOW: 35



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