



Prep Friday

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Tom Hanks
learns something
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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2013

Washington County has most top schools

The county has 22 high-performing public schools in state ratings; Multnomah has 16

By Betsy Hammond
betsyhammond@oregonian.com

Oregon's 114 top-performing schools are spread among 25 of Oregon's 36 counties, including remote Harney and Wallowa, which have only 7,000 residents apiece.

But Washington County had far more than any other county: 22, ranging from 1,500-student Sherwood High to Arco Iris Spanish Immersion School, a 3-year-old Beaverton charter school with about 160 students. Fifteen of the 22 top performers were in the Beaverton district, including two high-poverty elementary schools hailed as models for the rest of the state, Raleigh Hills and Greenway.

More populous Multnomah County was home to 16 of Oregon's top-tier schools, including three model schools. The Oregon Department of Education released ratings of the state's 1,200 public schools Thursday, assigning each to one of five performance levels based on their educational effectiveness in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Elementary and middle schools were rated primarily by how far they helped individual students progress on state reading and math tests from year to year, with extra weight given to their progress with low-income, minority, second-language and special ed students. High schools were judged largely by their graduation rates and student growth on tests, again with extra weight given to their success with historically lagging groups.

More than half of those who made the elite top 10 percent were elementary schools, including Edy Ridge and Middleton in Sherwood and Woodstock and Ainsworth in

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GOP splits on debt debate

As shutdown hits 11th day, Senate moderates offer to raise borrowing limit; poll shows party's support has cratered

By Lori Montgomery and Paul Kane
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama opened talks with House Republicans on Thursday about their plan to lift the federal debt limit through Thanksgiving, raising hopes that Washington would avert its first default on the national debt.

But after a 90-minute meeting at the White

House, the two sides remained at odds over how and when to end the government shutdown — now in its 11th day — with Obama insisting that Republicans reopen federal agencies before negotiations over broader budget issues can begin.

In the Senate, top Republicans began crafting a proposal that would reopen the government and raise the federal debt limit for as long as three months — an approach closer to the terms Obama has set to end the standoff.

The developments meant that bipartisan negotiations were suddenly underway on

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Signs of progress? House Speaker John Boehner threw the idea of a six-week extension of the debt ceiling in exchange for negotiations over spending cuts and other fiscal issues, initially getting a positive response from the White House.

Not so fast: Senate leader Harry Reid says there's no deal unless the proposal includes ending the government shutdown. Republicans met with President Barack Obama and were discussing their options with Democrats late into the night.

What's next: Reid is introducing Senate legislation to extend the debt ceiling with no contingencies. Boehner is expected to introduce House legislation as well, although no specifics were forthcoming Thursday night.

Wall Street reacts: The market, responding hopefully to signs of a possible deal, was up 323 points, the largest single-day gain since January.

THE SHUTDOWN, IN REAL LIFE

Oregon officials, people in need worry about social programs that rely on federal money



BENJAMIN BRINK/THE OREGONIAN

By Yuxing Zheng
yzheng@oregonian.com

HILLSBORO — In a bustling office west of downtown Hillsboro far from the divisive halls of Congress, the federal government shutdown has left some of the most vulnerable Oregonians fretting over how they'll pay rent, heat their homes or simply eat.

"I can't afford my bills," said Marnie Edwards, an Aloha resident who visited Community Action of Washington County's office in Hillsboro on Thursday afternoon to apply for low-income energy assistance.

"If this program wasn't here, I'd be at home

in the dark with no heat. There's nowhere else to go."

State and social service officials are starting to develop contingency plans for when critical programs run out of money. Oregon officials are considering whether it's feasible to use state money to "float" programs, with the federal government paying the state back later, said Matt Shelby, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Administrative Services. Some programs already operate that way.

"There are promises being made at the federal level about reimbursement, but

how seriously can we take those?" Shelby said. "We can't float something into perpetuity before we run into our own cash-flow issues."

The shutdown began Oct. 1, the start of the federal fiscal year. Most Oregon programs have enough "carryover" money from fiscal 2013 to last through October but would have to end or reduce operations come November. Many social service programs rely heavily on federal money.

That would leave hundreds of thousands

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Lenny Santa Ana, 36, came to the Community Action of Washington County office on Thursday to apply for help with utility bills. Santa Ana has a learning disability and relies on Social Security disability payments and other assistance. Without such help, she said, "a lot of people would be homeless, living in a car or storage unit."

Food stamps: The program is funded through October. And then: State officials are working on contingency plans for November.

Energy assistance: There is money to cover the program until the end of the month. And then: Many community action agencies run out of money.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Funding is available through October. And then: It's unclear where additional funding would come from.

COMING SUNDAY

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Syrian refugees



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Plants spared closure over salmonella

By Lynne Terry
lterry@oregonian.com

The U.S. Department of Agriculture decided Thursday not to close three Foster Farms plants, saying the company made major changes to stem salmonella contamination.

"Foster Farms has submitted and implemented immediate substantive changes to their slaughter and processing to allow for continued operations," the USDA said in a statement. It said inspectors will verify that the changes are implemented "in a continuous and ongoing basis."

Inspectors will step up their testing and sampling at the plants over the next three

months to ensure that the company has, in fact, reined in the salmonella bacteria, the statement said. On Monday the USDA put Foster Farms on notice, saying if it didn't bolster its food safety procedures the plants would be closed.

Foster Farms raw poultry is implicated in a multistate outbreak that has sickened at least 280 people in 17 states, including Oregon.

The company's president apologized, but Foster Farms did not order a recall. The USDA, which essentially allows poultry producers to sell chicken with a 10 percent rate of salmonella, didn't either.

The Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention, which has been hobbled by the government shutdown, has tracked seven strains of Salmonella Heidelberg in the outbreak, which the CDC said is resistant to antibiotics.

More than 40 percent of those sickened have been hospitalized, which is about double what scientists would expect.

The outbreak is the second for Foster Farms in a year. In February, officials in Oregon and Washington state issued an unusual public health alert, warning consumers about salmonella-tainted Foster Farms chicken. Oregon officials said the chicken came from the

company's plant in Kelso, Wash., which supplies the Northwest.

This week Foster Farms said it stepped up food safety practices at the Kelso plant. Apparently they've been effective. Oregon and Washington were largely spared in the latest outbreak, and the USDA said in its notification letters that it had found relatively low rates of salmonella at the plant.

Oregon officials first linked Foster Farms poultry to a specific strain of Salmonella Heidelberg a decade ago. They informed both the company and the USDA. Since then, cases have risen and fallen, depending on the year.

Services

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of low-income, disabled and otherwise vulnerable Oregonians possibly losing energy assistance and other social services. Some programs, such as food stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, rely entirely on federal dollars.

In Community Action's Hillsboro office, concerns about the shutdown extend beyond the abstract.

Lenny Santa Ana, 36, came to apply for low-income energy assistance. "Is the government still shut down?" she asked.

Santa Ana, 36, has a learning disability and relies on Social Security disability payments, food stamps and low-income energy assistance to live in a one-bedroom apartment in Beaverton. Without such programs, she said, "a lot of people would be homeless, living in a car or storage unit."

"Having electricity assistance eases the suffering," she said. "Without these programs, it makes life that much harder."

Edwards, the Aloha resident, also receives food stamps. "It's scary," she said. "How much further is it going to trickle down?"

Here's how a protracted shutdown could affect some of the most-used social service programs:

Social Security: Social Security and Supplemental Security Income payments will continue without changes, according to the Social Security Administration. Field offices are providing limited services during the shutdown.

Medicaid: Payments through the Oregon Health Plan and other Medicaid programs are, like other entitlement programs, not affected by the shutdown, said Patty Wentz, spokeswoman for the Oregon Health Authority.

Food stamps: Money is available through October, and the Oregon Department of Human Services will start to develop contingency plans for what would happen in November. Money through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the formal name for food stamps, is transferred on a monthly basis. About one in five Oregonians receive food stamps.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Carryover funds will cover cash assistance for very poor families through October, but it's unclear what would happen after that. The state receives quarterly payments for the program, which helps about 35,000 Oregon households.

Housing: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development pays for public housing and Section 8 vouchers through local housing authorities, such as Home Forward, formerly the Housing Authority of Portland. Home Forward serves 23,000

clients.

Public housing is paid for through the end of the year, said Shelley Marchesi, Home Forward spokeswoman. Section 8 money is available through October, but after that, it's unclear.

"We have gotten conflicting information on whether Section 8 money is also available through the end of the year," Marchesi said. "We're not sure quite what that means. The people we typically work with at HUD are not available to us."

Energy assistance and weatherization: The state receives \$33 million a year to provide energy assistance to about 70,000 low-income households in Oregon. Many community action agencies are using carryover money that will last only through October.

"At the same time when our energy assistance program may be seeing significant cuts, we're going to see a lot more people calling our line needing assistance," said Brenda Durbin, director of social services for Clackamas County. "It hits us both on the supply and demand side."

The program starts Oct. 1 every year, and Community Action in Washington County has received more than 2,000 calls a week since September, said Jerralynn Ness, executive director. The agency gets \$1.5 million in federal money every year to help 8,000 to 9,000 families.

About 1,750 Oregon households receive help with weatherization and energy conservation services every year to the tune of \$7 million in federal funds. Community Action uses about \$750,000 of it to pay local contractors to perform the work.

"If (the shutdown) went on too long, we put in place a plan where we have to slow payments to all vendors," Ness said. "It really starts to hit the local economy when we do that."

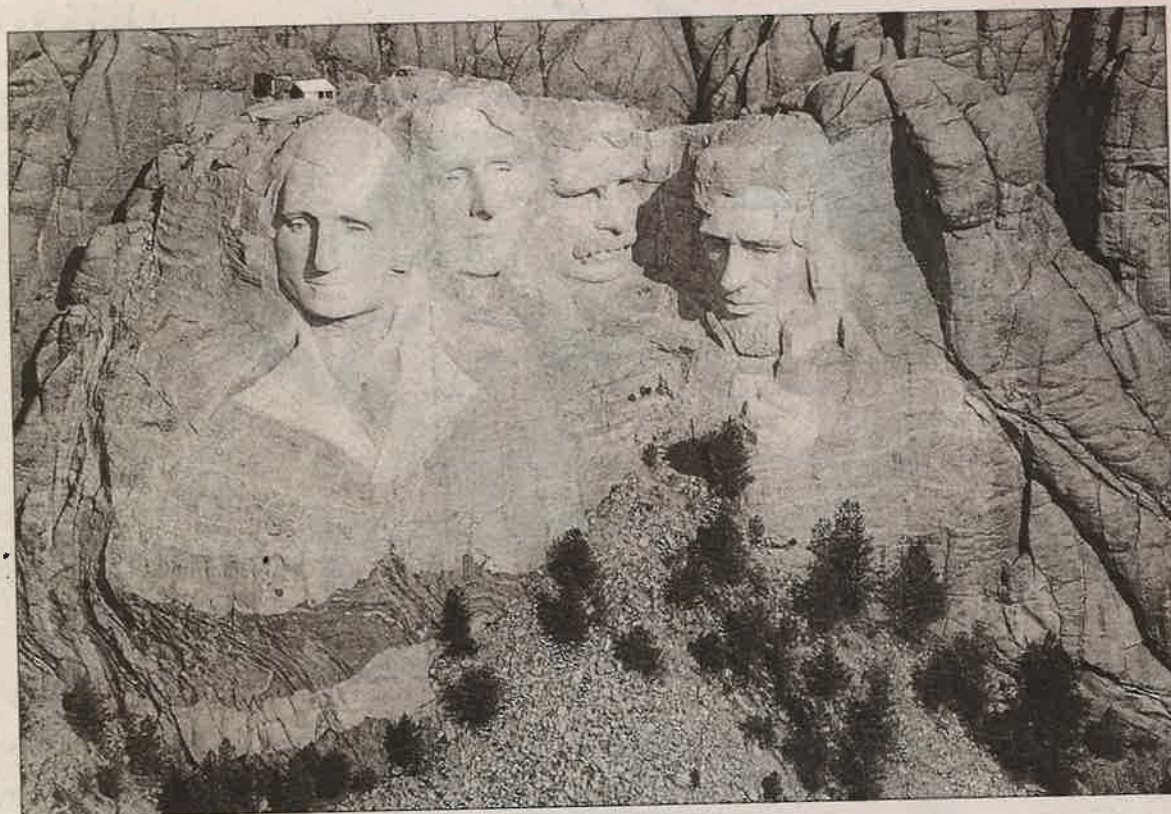
Senior services: Programs funded through the Older Americans Act, such as Meals on Wheels, would probably see their federal dollars disappear in November.

Meals on Wheels People feeds 5,000 seniors a day in Multnomah, Washington and Clark counties. It receives 70 percent of its funding from private sources and can withstand a months-long shutdown, said spokeswoman Julie Piper Finley.

In Clackamas County, funding for Meals on Wheels sites would run out after October.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children: The WIC program, as it's commonly known, will run through October with contingency funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Contingency plans are being developed for November. The program provided supplemental food, health referrals and nutrition education for more than 176,000 pregnant women, mothers and their children in Oregon last year.

The White House has floated an offer for states to use their own money to reopen some national parks that have been closed because of the partial government shutdown, but it could prove to be too pricey for them to make use of.



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States might reopen national parks

By Jack Healy and Ian Lovett
New York Times News Service

The governors of at least four states expressed initial interest in an offer Thursday from Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to allow them to reopen national parks in their states, although it remained unclear whether any such deals could be reached soon.

After more than a week of requests from several states that they be allowed to reopen parks closed by the partial federal government shutdown, Jewell said the administration would be willing to consider such agreements as long as the states agreed to pay the full operating costs, including the salaries of all federal park employees.

"South Dakota, Utah, Colorado and Arizona have all expressed some initial interest in exploring a potential agreement," said Blake Androff, chief spokesman for the Interior Department in Washington. "But discussions are in the early

stages. No formal offers have been submitted."

In Utah officials hailed the offer as a breakthrough that could defuse rising tensions over the closing of the state's five national parks. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert has urged the Interior Department to let the state use its own money to reopen them.

South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard also spoke with Jewell on Thursday about the new offer.

"This announcement today is a welcome change," said the governor's spokesman, Tony Venhuizen. "The governor is hopeful it can lead to a solution that reopens Mount Rushmore."

Before the shutdown Daugaard had offered to spend state money to keep Mount Rushmore open on a limited basis — the gift shop would have remained closed, for instance — and staff the park with state workers. The cost to the state would have been minimal, Venhuizen said. But the

governor is not convinced that the current proposal would work for South Dakota.

"This is a very different offer, almost certainly a more expensive one," Venhuizen said. "We really need to know the details about what it would cost before he can make a decision."

In Arizona a spokesman for Gov. Jan Brewer said the state received no formal offer from the Interior Department about a change in policy and was skeptical about the offer described.

Brewer had offered to pay to partly reopen Grand Canyon National Park, for instance, at a cost of \$30,000 a day, said Andrew Wilder, the governor's spokesman. But to fully reopen the park would cost far more, he said.

"I think the administration would need to explain why full funding is necessary and why a partial reopen is not possible," Wilder said. "It raises suspicions about whether or not they are earnest in their offer."

Other states said they were

not interested in Jewell's offer.

A spokesman for Gov. Matt Mead of Wyoming said the offer did not change the state's position. "The governor has said Wyoming cannot bail out the federal government, and we cannot spend state money to do the work of the federal government," said Renny MacKay, the spokesman.

California also said it would pass.

"The state has no plans to front the money to reopen the national parks in California," said H.D. Palmer, deputy director for external affairs at the California Department of Finance. He cited uncertainty over the debt ceiling negotiations in Washington as a factor, as well as uncertainty about whether the states would be reimbursed.

"It's unfortunate," Palmer said, "because a number of communities around national parks, which depend on people visiting the parks, are already feeling the impacts of the shutdown."

that he would not make policy concessions.

Republicans, however, did describe the process as a negotiation. The 20 House Republicans — Boehner declined the offer to bring all 232 GOP lawmakers to the White House — gathered in the Roosevelt Room with Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and other senior officials.

both issues and we need to do so quickly."

Senate Democrats were intrigued by Collins' proposal but unhappy with its demand for Democratic concessions. Those would include the repeal of a tax on medical devices that helps fund Obama's health care law, the Affordable Care Act, and new income-verification procedures for people who receive tax subsidies

mine the health care law, frequently called "Obamacare" by critics.

Boehner's offer to temporarily lift the debt limit but keep the government shuttered was engineered in part to satisfy far-right conservatives, who first suggested using the threat of a shutdown to strip funding for the law.

On Thursday, many creators of that strategy — including

Shutdown

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two separate tracks Thursday after weeks of stalemate. Major questions remain, however, about the path ahead.

Both sides described Obama's evening session with

Schools

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Portland.

in school. Findley has almost no low-income students.

But at least six of the Washington County schools that propelled their students far ahead in reading and math have a more challenging demographic: At least 40 per