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**Oregon Legislature Releases Capitol Operations
Safety Plan for 2021 Session**

Plan ensures safety and public participation during pandemic

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Legislature today released its Capitol Operations Safety Plan for the upcoming 2021 Legislative Session. The plan provides a framework for how to convene safely for the upcoming session while ensuring transparency and public participation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than 1,500 Oregonians.

The goal of the plan is to balance the following priorities:

- Safety – for the public, building employees, legislators and their staff
- Transparency – to ensure that the process is clear and encourages public input
- Strong public participation – to make sure proposed legislation receives public review
- The completion of the Legislature’s business – to meet the needs of the state

“As we continue to address the hardship brought on by the pandemic, this plan will ensure safety, transparency, and strong public participation in the 2021 legislative session,” House Speaker Tina Kotek said. “With essential safety protocols in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Oregonians from across the state will be able to testify at every public hearing remotely to have their voices heard in the Capitol. This plan will require an unprecedented level of coordination and communication to make this session a success for the people of Oregon. As we work toward a more equitable recovery from the pandemic and other crises, it will be critical to hear as much as possible from Oregonians in every community.”

“We have never seen a session like this before. We need to keep members and staff safe,” Senate President Peter Courtney said. “Legislative staff worked hard to come up with a plan that is safe and transparent. Every session, Oregonians make their voices heard on issues they care about. We need these voices. This plan will make the legislative process more accessible to Oregonians across the state.”

The Capitol Operations Safety Plan is the product of a three-month, thorough review of all building operations. The review was led by a core team of nonpartisan Capitol staff, which included members of the Oregon Capitol Club and the Capitol Press Association, as well as a bipartisan group of legislators and staff members. The goals of the core team were to develop a plan that complies with public health directives and guidelines while maximizing opportunities for public engagement.

Public health officials from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) have reviewed and approved of the plan. Infectious disease experts from Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU) have toured the Capitol, reviewed written mitigation efforts, and found the operations plan to be thorough and well-conceived.

The session will begin with committees meeting remotely and physical entry to the Capitol permitted for authorized personnel. Floor sessions will be limited to necessary business only, with daily floor sessions beginning in April. If public health conditions improve, public entry to the Capitol will be expanded in accordance with public health protocols.

Authorized personnel who work in the building, including legislators, are instructed to follow public health workplace rules set by Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA), including mask usage and maintaining six feet of physical distance from others. Members will be permitted to have staff on-site but will be limited to the office occupancy limits. Remote work will be strongly encouraged for all other staff and legislative agencies.

The Presiding Officers will work with Democratic and Republican caucus leaders to determine when in-person work in the Capitol can be expanded. Currently, Marion County is among the 23 of 36 Oregon counties in the Extreme Risk category. County conditions will be monitored weekly beginning in February to determine the potential for expanded entry.

The Legislature will convene on Monday, January 11 for the swearing in of new members and the start of Organizational Days. The Legislative Session will begin on Tuesday, January 19.

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