



Contact: Andrea Dominguez, Chief of Staff
541-889-8866

4/8/2020

Oregon House District 60 Newsletter

Issue #6

News & Information on COVID-19 in Oregon

Friends,

I thought I would start by sharing some good news: Oregon's Coronavirus (COVID-19) curve is flattening. Our social distancing measures are working, and current modeling suggests the number of those that could become infected is being cut by 50-70 percent, and that the outbreak in Oregon may have peaked or soon will.

As the positive case numbers for Coronavirus are starting to decrease, we need to have a conversation about knowing when it will be safe to start loosening or rolling-back some of the restrictions the Governor has put in place and what that will look like so that we can restart our economy and ensure the economic well-being of all Oregon residents. The health and economic well-being of our communities are not independent of one another and both need to be addressed as we start to look at a recovery plan.

Senator Lynn Findley (R-Vale), Rep. Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles), and I co-authored an op-ed piece on this particular topic. You can read that message [here](#).

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

Tomorrow, Senator Findley, Rep. Bonham, and I are hosting a virtual town hall to discuss our communities, the impacts of the Coronavirus, and Oregon's path forward. We'd like to have a conversation with you about what is happening in Oregon right now, and the actions we're taking as your legislative leaders at the regional and state level to keep us moving forward successfully. Most importantly, we want to give you an opportunity to share what's on your mind and how we can help.

The virtual town hall will take place on Thursday, April 9th at 4:30 – 5:30pm PDT. Registration is required and is limited so [please register early using the link here](#). Registered participants will receive a confirmation email with a password and information to join.

I hope you will all join us.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

April is National Child Abuse Prevention month. With the stay-at-home order in place, and schools shuttered, child welfare officials are predicting a decrease in reports of abuse or

neglect because children are having less contact with mandatory reporters. We need to be extra diligent and aware of potential concerns for the safety of our children in our communities.

Sadly, domestic violence reports are also on the rise, as economic instability and stress are triggers for both child abuse and neglect and domestic violence. If you witness or suspect a child is being abused, call the Oregon's Child Abuse Hotline at 855-503-7233. The National Domestic Violence Hotline can be reached at 1-800-799-7233.

Social distancing from friends and family and other types of stresses can take a toll on an individual's mental health. The federal government has set up a Disaster Distress Helpline that operates 24/7 to provide crisis counseling and support to those experiencing mental and emotional distress due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to speak to a crisis counselor. Oregon also has a helpline through the National Alliance for Mental Illness at: 1-800-343-6264.

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 60

As of yesterday, the numbers for District 60 are as follows:

COUNTY	POSITIVE	DEATHS	NEGATIVE
Oregon Statewide	1,181	33	21,826
Baker	0	0	17
Grant	1	0	16
Harney	0	0	38
Lake	0	0	38
Malheur	2	0	102

Source: <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>

OHA Last Updated: 4/7/2020 @ 8:00am

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is now advising the use of simple, homemade cloth face masks to slow the spread of the Coronavirus while in public. Surgical and N95 masks should be reserved for health care workers. A video on how to make a mask can be found [here](#).

SCHOOLS

Currently, the Governor has directed Oregon schools to be closed through April 28, but Oregon Dept. of Education officials are advising districts to adopt distance learning techniques as they expect the closure to extend beyond that date. Several other West Coast states, including Washington and California, have extended their school closures through the end of the school year. Oregon Districts have until April 13 to launch their online learning programs and distribute lesson packets to students without internet access. Some districts are also delivering laptops to students who need them.

I've received numerous questions about why school days cannot be made up during the summer. As the Crane School Board Chair and parent of two current students, I value the education our students receive, and I believe the state should be striving to include as many educational opportunities and options as possible. I can tell you that making up school days during the summer is complicated, mainly due to funding. Teachers are continuing to be paid during the closures, unions must be negotiated with, some are requesting that teachers be paid time-and-a-half if they work this summer, and minor estimates suggest it would cost over \$2 billion to make summer school happen. Unfortunately, the Governor has not indicated that making up these school days is a priority.

As for college students with federal student loans, no payments will be due on those loans until September 30, 2020. If you have questions about whether your loan qualifies, please call your lender.

LETTERS TO THE GOVERNOR

Hospitals across Oregon are facing financial strain because of their revenue streams from non-emergency surgeries being completely halted. The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems recently sent a letter to Governor Brown requesting the creation of an Emergency Hospital Stabilization Fund with \$250 million in funding to be used for PPE supplies and funding for the initial urgent needs of local hospitals. Many hospitals are facing closure, staff furloughs and layoffs, service reductions, and more. Once each

hospital has sufficient PPE supplies, we need to put people back to work and allow some non-emergency surgeries to begin again.

This same problem has been seen in many other fields as well. Dentists and veterinarians have are losing revenue while all non-emergency surgeries have been put on hold. This is especially noticeable in counties that share a border with Idaho which does not have the same restrictions. Many Oregonians are going across the border for dental and veterinary services, pushing our local clinics closer to permanent closure. I sent a letter to the Governor this week regarding this exact issue.

Landlords have unique concerns as well, for while the state has implemented a reprieve from rent payments and put a stop to residential evictions, landlords who own these properties still have mortgage payments due and bills for upkeep, power, garbage, water/sewer, etc., that must be paid. My office composed a letter to the Governor that included 12 other legislators urging our state to find a solution to assist landlords. Their bills are still due. The only way for them to recoup their losses if they do not receive help is to raise rents or sell their properties. This will not help with our statewide affordable housing crisis.

Small business owners are asking the Governor to delay the implementation of the Corporate Activities Tax (CAT tax). These concerns have been shared with the Governor and her staff by numerous legislators, but she has not yet taken any action. It is also being discussed within the Joint Legislative Coronavirus Response Committee. The simple fact is businesses cannot afford to pay taxes when they have no incoming revenue and it has been proposed that the CAT tax be delayed for the first two quarters of 2020. We will continue to ask to the Governor to take immediate action on the CAT tax and provide some relief to our small businesses.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Oregon's unemployment numbers are exploding. I've received numerous calls and emails from constituents that are experiencing problems with applying for unemployment. Many of these problems are due to the large increase in people applying for unemployment due to business closures from the Coronavirus. We are happy to help you navigate these issues. First, you must apply via the [website](#). The phone lines at the Oregon Employment Dept. have been inundated with calls and requests and is understaffed so we recommend applying through the website as a first step. If your request was denied, we may be able to help, but that depends on the reason your unemployment claim was denied. If there is a problem with the website, please let us know and we can ask the Employment Dept. staff to assist you. Please note, all federal unemployment funds are administered through the state Employment Dept. so you must apply through the state website to qualify. For questions about your claim, the Employment Department also has an email dedicated to responding to case-specific questions at: OED_COVID19_info@oregon.gov.

You can find out what unemployment benefits are available in Oregon and how to apply [here](#).

SMALL BUSINESSES

Oregon employers who have SAIF workers compensation policies may qualify for assistance from the SAIF Coronavirus Worker Safety Fund. This fund has \$10 million set aside to help employers with SAIF policies pay for expenses tied to making workplaces safer. You can apply [here](#).

The federal Paycheck Protection Program is up and running. This program provides \$350 billion in government-backed loans to small businesses that employ fewer than 500 employees. If the loan is used to pay employees and keep them on the payroll for eight weeks, the government will forgive the amount of the loan used to pay employees during that period. In other words, businesses will not have to pay that portion back. You can apply [here](#).

More information on resources for small businesses can be found [here](#).

FEDERAL UPDATES

According to President Trump's Administration, as of Monday, 1.79 million tests had been administered in the United States. New testing methods with quicker results are being

researched and implemented as they receive approval. A Level 4 global Do Not Travel advisory has been issued—meaning U.S. Citizens should avoid all international travel due to the Coronavirus.

It was previously stated that Social Security recipients would have to file a simple tax statement in order to qualify for the federal stimulus checks. The Treasury Secretary has now announced that Social Security recipients will automatically receive the relief check without filing a tax return.

SCAMS

There has been a spike in Coronavirus-related scams regarding everything from stimulus checks, home testing kits, fake cures, and others. Please note the government will not call you directly, demand money, or threaten to arrest you. If you are contacted by someone claiming to be from the government asking for personal information, please report the incident to the Federal Trade Commission [here](#).

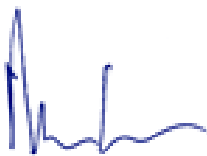
Talk of a Special Session for Oregon's Legislature continues, but remains to be seen. The Governor and the Joint Legislative Coronavirus Response Committee are working to outline what needs to be done, which actions can be taken now, and which action would require legislative approval. Funds available through the Emergency Board are also being considered. Once we have more information about these items, the Governor will decide whether to call for a special session. In the meantime, the Governor announced yesterday the convening of her newly assembled Medical Advisory Panel, consisting of doctors, infectious disease experts, and medical professions to advise her on additional and future response efforts.

We are starting the conversation with local, regional and state leaders and citizens like you to prepare to re-open Oregon once the prevention and spread of Coronavirus is successful. My office stands ready to help in any way we can.

If we can be of any help to you, please contact us at: rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov. I do appreciate your patience, my one-person staff and I are working hard on your behalf and response times may be delayed. I can assure you we hear you and care about addressing your inquiries and concerns as quickly as we are able.

It's important to encourage all of us to stay the course. While it's becoming more and more challenging, it's important that we stay home and abide by the current measures in place. The sooner we can flatten the curve which only happens if we practice social distancing and other preventative measures, the sooner we can begin to rebuild and recover and get back out into our communities. I am staying home with my family on the farm, and I hope you will do the same.

Be safe.



Representative Mark Owens
House District 60
Frontier Oregon—The Best Part of the State



District Office:
258 S. Oregon Street
Ontario, OR 97914
541-889-8866

rep.markowens@oregonlegislature.gov

Follow me on Twitter

Follow me on Facebook

Visit our State Webpage