

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **As Oregon's legislative session hits the midway point, plenty of big issues remain**

*OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt, Lauren Dake*

The halfway point of a long legislative session in Salem often brings clarity. Not this year.

“To a certain extent we are adrift, we are at sea and we’re even rudderless at times,” said **Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**. “In the past, I always felt like we all knew — collectively as a body of 90 — what we were doing.”

There’s no denying lawmakers face plenty of challenges: crises in housing, public defense, mental health care; roads and bridges hurting for attention; an increasing inability to pay for worsening wildfires.

But as this year’s session crosses the halfway point, it’s not clear how the Legislature will respond to any one of those. Bills on some topics seem to have momentum, and others have yet to take shape.

The Republican and Democratic leaders in the Senate revealed they’ve hit the pickleball courts together. They’ve suggested a game of cornhole was in their future. They spent a Friday evening chatting on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

But in Salem, peace is often tenuous.

House Minority Leader Christine Drazan, R-Canby, said the GOP was registering concern because some Democratic ideas are moving forward, and also because some bills with bipartisan support aren’t. The former group includes bills that Republicans see as giveaways to Democratic allies, such as a proposal that would [grant weekly unemployment checks](#) to striking workers. The latter group includes a bill to [delay mandatory sales](#) of electric trucks, and to make it easier for cities [to regulate homeless camps](#). Even in the comparably placid Senate, clashes loom. Democrats have made clear in recent weeks they plan to press laws further regulating access to firearms, always a source of controversy in the Capitol. “There’s some disastrous stuff that’s still out there,” said **Bonham**. “You say, OK, we’re halfway done.’ And I say, ‘It’s a marathon and I’m ready for my cup of water. We still have a lot of running to do.’”

But this year, it is the sheer number of outstanding to-dos that stand out. To date, the Legislature’s signature accomplishment is passing a [relatively benign extension](#) of taxes that will help bring in billions in federal Medicaid funding. That passed with bipartisan support.

Last week, after months of work, Democrats [unveiled their first suggestion](#) for raising more than \$1 billion a year to fund road and bridge upkeep. It’s a package of roughly a dozen tax and fee increases — including an eventual 20-cent hike in the state’s gas tax — that Republicans and business interests have lampooned as tone-deaf.

“It is a massive amount of taxes that I think will be completely unacceptable to taxpayers,” said Bonham. “But it’s a framework. We finally know what we’re talking about.”

Democrats say they’re serious — and they have the supermajority status to back up their ideas. If the party can stick together, it can pass new taxes through each chamber without a single Republican vote.

#### **Oregon bill would give consumers another tool in fights against insurers**

*Oregon Live | By Matthew Kish*

On Tuesday, Oregon lawmakers moved to change that, passing a bill out of a Senate committee designed to make it easier to hold insurance companies accountable when disaster strikes, but one that opponents say is unnecessary and will only increase insurance costs at a time of worrisome inflation. Oregon’s Unlawful Trade Practices Act gives individuals a right to sue businesses for alleged deceptive business practices, but Oregon is one of 21 states that exempts its insurance industry from its deceptive acts and practices laws.

[Senate Bill 174](#) would eliminate that exemption and make it easier to take legal action against insurance companies.

**Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte**, voted against the legislation.

“At a time when we have folks whose insurance is not being renewed and other people are being costed out, I’m very concerned that we’re here and out of a desire to want to help, we’re causing repercussions yet again,” he said.

#### [Oregon GOP Chairman Resigns After Oregon Journalism Project Report About His Past](#)

*Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss*

Oregon Republican Party chairman Gerald “Jerry” Cummings announced his resignation today.

Cummings’ resignation comes less than 24 hours after the Oregon Journalism Project published [a story about allegations of sexual violence his ex-wife](#) leveled against him in a long-running divorce and custody case. He denied any wrongdoing.

In a statement early this afternoon, Cummings, 51, an insurance agent and pastor from Columbia County, said he is stepping down to spare his family any further difficulty.

#### [Bill advances to put Oregon’s Measure 114 gun control plan into effect](#)

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

The House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday voted along party lines to send a major gun control bill to the floor that sets out how stalled [Measure 114](#) would be enacted with some modifications.

The bill changes some provisions of voter-approved Measure 114, such as increasing fees for gun permits.

It bans the sale or purchase of magazines holding more than 10 rounds, requires a permit to buy a gun and closes the so-called “Charleston Loophole” by requiring the completion, not just initiation, of a criminal background check to buy or transfer a gun.

Lewis complained [House Bill 3075-2](#) targets “lawful gun owners” and predicted the state would spend a lot of money for continued legal challenges.

#### [Second major gun control bill advances in Oregon Legislature](#)

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

The Legislature’s [second major gun control bill](#) passed a committee hurdle Wednesday, moving to the Senate floor.

[Senate Bill 243-4](#), approved 4-2, makes four major changes in Oregon’s gun regulations.

**Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte**, said he objected to wrapping the gun policy changes into one bill that allows only a single vote. He and the committee’s other Republican, committee vice chair Kim Thatcher of Keizer, voted against advancing the bill.

The other [major gun control bill](#), House Bill 3075-2, passed the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday and now goes to the House floor. It includes Measure 114’s major provisions to ban large-capacity ammunition magazines and require a permit before buying a gun with some modifications, including increasing fees for permits.

McLane also said he has heard from many concealed gun license holders concerned that allowing a gun ban on “adjacent grounds” of public buildings is too vague.

#### [It’s not a crime in Oregon to post AI-generated naked photos of others. A bill to change that gains traction](#)

*Oregon Live | By Aimee Green*

A bill that could make Oregon the 32nd state to criminalize or otherwise restrict people who seek to humiliate, hurt or harass others by creating AI-generated naked images of them and sharing them publicly passed its first legislative hurdle this week.

[House Bill 2299](#), which a committee unanimously approved, is headed for the House floor. It would update state law, which only explicitly makes it a crime to maliciously circulate naked or sexually explicit photos or videos of another person if the images are real.

The bill also would up the severity of the crime for offenders who intentionally set out to harm victims from a misdemeanor to a felony for a first offense. That crime would be renamed “first-degree unlawful dissemination of an intimate image.”

### [Cyberattack shuts down Oregon DEQ networks Wednesday: What we know](#)

KOIN | By Kaitlin Flanigan

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality shut down its networks and vehicle inspection stations amid a cyberattack on Wednesday, and inspection stations will stay closed through Friday, the agency announced.

According to a news release sent out late Wednesday morning, as Enterprise Information Services investigates the cyberattack, Oregon DEQ is in the process of shutting down its networks to keep its agency's servers and network isolated "until the attack is totally contained and potentially eradicated."

### [Details of Oregon's push for school accountability begin to sharpen](#)

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

Details are solidifying on a [sweeping effort](#) under consideration by the Legislature to commit each Oregon school district to meet measurable academic growth targets in hopes of improving stalled learning among the state's 545,000 public school students.

The proposal is a centerpiece of Gov. Tina Kotek's education agenda and was introduced last month with great fanfare. But it quickly [ran into skepticism](#) from some schools lobbyists. Its early drafts lacked specificity, they said, and they questioned the Oregon Department of Education's ability to manage such an overhaul.

In its current incarnations, the basics remain the same. [House Bill 2009](#) and [Senate Bill 141](#) — two versions of the same bill that moved through both chambers in order to give legislators maximum time to ask questions and hear feedback — would give the Oregon Department of Education more power to intervene when students aren't making progress in reading and math.

### [Oregon House passes bill to boost summer literacy programs statewide](#)

KATU | By Sana Aljobory

In a significant move to enhance academic outcomes for students across Oregon, the state House of Representatives has unanimously passed [House Bill 2007](#). This legislation aims to expand access to summer literacy programs, particularly targeting students who are reading below grade level.

The bill provides grants to school districts, public charter schools, education service districts, and federally recognized tribes to offer summer reading programs. These programs will combine structured literacy instruction with culturally responsive practices and enrichment activities.

### [Oregon officials failed to follow basic public contracting rules when approving \\$32.3 million for wildfire housing, review finds](#)

Oregon Live | By Hillary Borrud

An Oregonian/OregonLive investigation [highlighted problems](#) with the housing agency's wildfire recovery work in 2023, when the state had yet to produce a single permanent home for survivors three years after the fires. When the newsroom requested bidding records for the defective modular housing, Oregon Housing and Community Services only provided the contract — not any records showing how the state decided to pick Pacific Housing Partners for the work.

Oregon public procurement rules allow governments to skip competitive bidding in certain circumstances, such as the emergency declared by the governor as a result of the 2020 wildfires. But governments are still required to document that process including their decision making and how they selected the contractors. Nelson noted it is especially important to document emergency procurement processes.

### [In Warm Springs, tribal members and other central Oregon residents share budget feedback](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

About one-fifth of the roughly five dozen people who spoke during the two-hour hearing were members of the Warm Springs tribes, while others traveled from central Oregon cities including Bend, Redmond, Madras, Prineville.

Nearly all of them came with specific requests for government spending on projects and programs that would far outpace the state's resources as laid out in a [\\$38 billion budget framework](#) Sanchez and Lieber released last month. Most of their budget rough draft reflects continuing current programs, with \$987.5 million available for additional spending — assuming proposals to cut federal spending responsible for about one-third of the state budget don't come to pass.

#### [Commentary: With Trump tariffs, Oregon wine is over a barrel](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle* | By Randy Stapilus

One of the first Oregon impacts of this year's international trade wars came to our house in a pleasing way: in the form of a few bottles of good wine, gifts from friends who work in that industry. We live in the north Willamette wine country, where personal connections to the wine industry are not hard to find.

#### [Oregon sees rise in unclaimed, indigent remains](#)

*OPB* | By Rolando Hernandez

From 2021 to 2024, the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board, the state agency that oversees death care, saw a whopping 19% increase in repayment claims from funeral homes for indigent remains.

#### [Bird flu in cows? Oregon is on watch to keep dairy cows safe ... and humans too](#)

*Jefferson Public Radio* | By Mike Green, Natalie Pate

Avian flu is a major concern across Oregon's agricultural environments. **Dr. Ryan Scholz** joins the Exchange to offer more insight. He's a state veterinarian at the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

#### **TRUMP**

#### [If Trump Stripped Oregon of Key Instructional Programs, Why Isn't the State Fighting Back?](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Joanna Hou

The U.S. Department of Education, under the command of the Trump administration, blocked final installments March 28 of COVID-era federal aid to state education agencies, sending panic across some parts of the country.

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief program, first established in March 2020, sent billions across the U.S. Under the Biden administration, states were allowed to apply for extensions to fund previously approved projects until January 2026. But Trump administration officials yanked back the money.

#### [1 in 3 Portlanders say they've been 'directly' impacted by Trump executive orders, poll finds](#)

*Oregon Live* | By Sami Edge

Horan is among the 33% of Portland area residents who say they've been "directly affected" by at least one of Trump's executive orders as the president rolls out edicts at a breakneck pace. Trump [signed more than 100 executive orders](#) by the end of March — more than an order a day.