

Oregon News

POLITICS

[The Oregon Supreme Court Rejects ODOT's 2022 Union Labor Rules](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

The Oregon Supreme Court ruled today against the Oregon Department of Transportation and in favor of the Oregon-Columbia Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America in a dispute over a rule ODOT imposed in 2023, requiring union labor on eight projects around the state.

The dispute stemmed from 2021 legislation requiring what are called community workforce agreements, or CWAs, on certain infrastructure projects.

ODOT then identified eight prospective public works projects around the state it planned to execute under the CWA it had negotiated with the various trade unions. The agency began soliciting bids on the first of eight projects that would be covered by the CWA on Dec. 21, 2023.

"Employing a tool that has never been utilized before in Oregon, a tool that is premised on prioritizing utilization of union labor to the expense of open-shop labor, is prejudicial," Gardiner wrote. "It is an irreparable prejudice to exclude 70% of our contractors."

[Oregon's voter registration errors stretch back further than DMV officials initially acknowledged](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt

Data entry errors that allowed noncitizens to be registered to vote in Oregon go much further back than state officials previously acknowledged, a report issued by the Oregon Department of Transportation on Friday shows.

[The report](#) turned up 118 new cases in which suspected noncitizens were incorrectly entered into the system as citizens. Under the state's Motor Voter law, people entered as citizens have been automatically registered to vote since 2016.

In 13 of these newly found cases, people registered in error voted in past elections, ODOT says. The agency says it's possible some or all had become citizens by the time they cast ballots. It's illegal in Oregon to vote as a noncitizen — even if you received a ballot through no fault of your own.

ODOT Director Kris Strickler and DMV Administrator Amy Joyce [said last year](#) there was no opportunity for noncitizens to be incorrectly registered to vote via DMV before 2021. That's because of a law that kicked in that year that allowed undocumented residents to get driver's licenses. Joyce has blamed errors in part on a drop-down menu in a DMV computer program that allowed noncitizens to be incorrectly labeled as citizens more easily.

While the agency offered significant details about errors predating 2021 in its new report, it's not the first time ODOT has mentioned they exist. As the agency reviews its data, it has made brief mention of a small number of "legacy errors" — including two apiece mentioned in reports released in March and February.

['OPB Politics Now': Oregon's legislative session hits the midway point](#)

OPB

On the latest episode of "OPB Politics Now," we discuss what the Legislature has accomplished so far, how the Trump administration has affected Salem and much more.

[3 major gun bills advance in Oregon legislature](#)

OPB | By Bryce Dole

Members of the House and Senate judiciary committees this week voted along party lines to move the bills forward, with Democrats using their majority power in the face of Republican pushback.

The bills would create a 72-hour waiting period for gun purchases, ban rapid-fire devices, initiate a state licensing program for gun dealers and lay the framework to implement Ballot Measure 114. The voter-approved law, which has been argued in the courts since its passage in 2022, bans purchases of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition and requires a permit before buying a gun.

Halfway through a legislative session with few bipartisan fights, the bills are prompting a flood of public feedback and will likely divide lawmakers on the simmering debate of gun control. Taken together, their passage would result in significant changes to such regulations in Oregon, a state already considered to have some of the nation's strictest gun laws.

Senate Republicans argue the bill does next to nothing to prevent suicides, the leading cause of firearm death in Oregon. **Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte**, said in a hearing Wednesday that he predicts the bill could spark "uncertainty and incredible amounts of litigation."

"I do not believe that this bill will achieve the goals of its sponsors and will instead negatively impact the rights of Oregonians to self-defense," McLane said.

[Bill revising ballot measure 114 up for a vote on the Oregon House Floor](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

Oregon state representatives will soon vote on a bill that would make several changes to Ballot Measure 114.

The bill proposes additional requirements for a permit's approval. Gun purchasers would also be required to verify their identity with a photograph and have their data entered into the Law Enforcement Data System. The original requirements set in Measure 114 would still be required under this bill.

[Oregon bill to give judges discretion to decriminalize drug possession, other crimes fails to advance](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A bill that would have granted judges the discretion to lower the seriousness of some misdemeanor offenses — so they would no longer be crimes but instead "violations" punishable by fines — died in committee this week.

[House Bill 2469](#) faced powerful opposition from prosecutors, who said it would have decriminalized a long list of crimes by allowing judges on a case-by-case basis to treat them as mere violations, similar to speeding tickets. Among that list: possessing small amounts of street drugs, [breaking into cars](#), [shoplifting less than \\$1,000](#) worth of merchandise, [some hate crimes](#), [having sex in public](#), [flashing strangers for sexual arousal](#), [soliciting sex for money](#), [trespassing](#) and [showing up to schools or playgrounds when sex offenders](#) have been prohibited from doing so.

If the bill had passed, opponents contended it could have created a backdoor for judges unhappy with the Legislature's 2024 reforms to Measure 110 to begin handling drug possession cases once again as violations.

['No real intervention': Oregon child welfare agency slammed for failure to protect kids with special needs](#)

Oregon Live | By Noelle Crombie

Nearly one-third of [child deaths](#) investigated last year by the Oregon Department of Human Services involved children with intellectual or developmental disabilities — a pattern that raises questions about whether the state is doing enough to protect them, a lawmaker and prominent advocacy organization said this week.

The state identified a total of nine deaths involving children with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other special needs from 2019 and 2023.

[10 children on Oregon child welfare agency's radar have died so far this year](#)

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

Ten children who were [on the radar](#) of the Oregon [Department of Human Services](#) died in the first three months of 2025, triggering state investigations.

That's up from two in the same time period last year and five in 2023.

Over the past four years, an average of six children have died on the state's watch by March. The 2025 number isn't unprecedented, however — in 2020 at least 13 children died before April.

Stenson and a prominent Oregon lawmaker [have also raised concerns](#) that the department is failing to help children with disabilities. The state investigated 20 child deaths last year and six of those children had a disability.

[**Bills that would have prevented large luxury homes, ritzy B&Bs on Oregon farmland fizzle**](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A pair of bills that attempted to rein in the rocketing costs of Oregon farmland as urbanites snap up some of it [to build dream homes or upscale hotels](#) has died in the Legislature this session.

[Senate Bill 78](#) — which would have discouraged the demolition of modest farmhouses so expansive luxury homes could be constructed in their place — failed to make it out of committee this week after the chairperson couldn't muster the votes to send it to the Senate floor. The legislatively set deadline was Wednesday.

A companion bill, [Senate Bill 77](#) — which would have prevented \$800-a-night B&Bs, hotels and other businesses that have nothing to do with farming from operating on agriculturally zoned acreage — also stalled in committee last month.

A third bill that would have relaxed land-use restrictions on farms, [Senate Bill 788](#), also died in committee last month. It would greenlighted weddings and other money-generating events on farms in eastern Oregon without requiring farmers to go through their county permitting processes.

[**Oregon senators kill proposal to make fossil fuels industry pay for climate-change driven disasters**](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

A bill that would have required fossil fuel companies doing business in Oregon to pay for the downstream and multigenerational costs of their climate pollution will not move forward.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Environment Wednesday decided not to take a vote and advance [Senate Bill 1187](#), the Make Polluters Pay Act, effectively letting the bill die in the committee.

[**Case of slain mental health worker shedding light on civil commitment debate in Oregon**](#)

KATU | By Christina Giardinelli

Dozens of mental health advocates have testified for and against [House Bill 2467](#), which would make it easier to civilly commit someone. The bill was written by the Oregon branch of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and has received a great deal of political support, including from Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek. Kotek's behavioral health policy expert testified in favor of the bill along with her wife, Aimee Kotek Wilson.

The bill specifies that the timeline for a threat within 30 days. It also makes it possible to civilly commit a person who is in jail rather than relying on the jail's medical system to provide for the person's mental health.

The bill also sets the threshold for civil commitment higher when it applies to danger to self and lowers the bar when it applies to danger to others. The goal is to balance out the civil liberties of people with mental health illnesses to make their own choices with the need for public safety.

[**Listen: Yamhill County is getting families with children out of homelessness. Here's what's working.**](#)

OPB | By Elizabeth Castillo

The [Yamhill Community Action Partnership](#) has [reached](#) “functional zero” for unsheltered families with children. That means more people in that group are exiting homelessness than are entering it in [Yamhill County](#).

The organization has invested in a liaison who works with landlords and clients to get people into rentals and stay housed. It also expanded emergency shelter capacity in Newberg and has focused on getting vulnerable populations into homes. Alexandra Ball is the executive director of YCAP. Amber Hansen-Moore is the organization's deputy director. They join us to share more about how YCAP is addressing homelessness.

[**Cyberattack causes Oregon DEQ to halt car inspections for rest of week**](#)

Oregon Live | By Tatum Todd

Car-emissions inspections have been paused across Oregon after [a cyberattack](#) rocked the state Department of Environmental Quality this week.

[Oregon businesses file \\$80M class-action suit alleging nationwide 'racket' of fake disability claims](#)

Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein

Four Oregon businesses that say they were [targeted for disability access violations](#) have filed a class-action suit against two Tennessee-based law firms and a Portland lawyer, alleging they engaged in a nationwide "racket" to extort money by filing fake Americans with Disabilities Act complaints.

FEDERAL

[Kotek and Oregon Education Officials Defy White House Order to Defund DEI in Schools](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

The Oregon Department of Education is pushing back against an April 3 federal order for states to scrap DEI programs, or [risk losing federal funding](#).

ODE did not sign [the certification document](#) from the federal government, spokesman Peter Rudy says. "The letter from Dr. Williams is our official response to USDOE; we will not be submitting any other response."

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek backed the agency. "I promised Oregonians that I would not back down from a fight when it comes to safeguarding Oregon values," she said in a Thursday statement.

According to EdTrust, an education research and advocacy organization, [Oregon collected](#) about \$433.5 million in federal funding for pre-K to 12th grade students and \$17.8 million for career and technical education programs in fiscal year 2025. The scale of DEI programs in Oregon schools remains unclear. But it appears that ODE has no intention to cancel those programs, though the intent of the federal certification is, in large part, to try and coerce state governments into halting such programming.

[Oregon governor, education director 'hold the line' against Trump funding threats over DEI](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

The Oregon Department of Education will not end diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to fit the Trump administration's interpretation of federal civil rights law, Gov. Tina Kotek and the state's education director announced Thursday.

The deadline to respond has now been [extended](#) to April 24 under an agreement between the department and several groups suing federal education officials over the directive.

About 10% to 14% of Oregon's annual public education budget typically comes from the federal government. Title I funds — about \$134 million — make up nearly 20% of what the state gets from the feds.

Kotek said in a news release Thursday that she directed the state's education department to "hold the line" against the administration's ultimatum.

[Governor Kotek defends Oregon's education funding against federal threats](#)

KATU | By Bobby Corser, Victor Park

Gov. Tina Kotek issued a strong response to the Trump administration's attempt to withhold promised funds from Oregon students. The federal ultimatum demanded the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) eliminate efforts supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. In response, ODE certified its compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

[Oregon rejects Trump administration's school funding threat over DEI policies](#)

OPB | By Rob Manning

Top officials in Oregon are refusing to sign off on a demand from the U.S. Department of Education that requires states to abandon policies related to diversity, equity and inclusion if they want to keep receiving federal funding for schools.

[Oregonians sound off on cuts to federal funds during attorneys general town hall](#)

KATU | By Tanvi Varma

The list of people fed up with federal cuts is long. You can add the president of Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette to the list. They're facing funding freezes and potential funding cuts that could hurt their ability to provide care to low-income patients.

"That means that Oregon will have 50% less funding for important Title X services, which include birth control, STI screening and syphilis," said Dr. Sara Kennedy, the president of Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette.

The senior manager of public policy at the Oregon Food Bank shared a similar concern.

[**Oregon AG Dan Rayfield and House Speaker Julie Fahey on recent Trump orders at town hall**](#)

KVAL

Rayfield has been vocal about how he feels, previously calling the president's orders "unconstitutional."

Rayfield hosts another town hall in Portland Thursday night and another virtual town hall next week.

[**Oregon lawmakers call for reversal of 'disastrous' layoffs at Social Security offices**](#)

KOIN | By Aaron Chavez

An Oregon delegation of lawmakers is urging the Social Security Administration's acting commissioner to reverse the decision to issue major layoffs to several offices.

[**Oregon Attorney General Joins Multi-State Effort to Sue for Federal Education Dollars Back**](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

Oregon attorney general Dan Rayfield joined 15 other state attorneys general and Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro on Thursday to sue the Trump administration for suspending millions of dollars in federal COVID-era school aid.

[**West Coast governors: We will defend our climate policies against Trump attack**](#)

OPB | By John Ryan

An executive order signed by President Donald Trump on Tuesday directs Attorney General Pam Bondi to look for state and local laws that address climate change or environmental justice and to "take all appropriate action" to stop enforcement of any that are illegal.

"My Administration is committed to unleashing American energy, especially through the removal of all illegitimate impediments to the identification, development, siting, production, investment in, or use of domestic energy resources," [the order states](#).

"The science is clear. Climate change is real and our state programs are critical to protecting our environment for generations to come," Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek (D) said in a statement provided to [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#). "I will continue to fight for the longstanding values of Oregonians."

[**Trump attack on state climate laws likely doomed, but attempts to yank funds may be next**](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Jacob Fischler

An executive order President Donald Trump signed Tuesday to block state-level renewable-energy initiatives set off alarm bells among climate advocates.

But experts and state policy groups said constitutional protections will blunt any effect the order would have on state operations.

The [order](#), one of four [Trump signed Tuesday](#) aiming to revitalize the coal industry, directs the U.S. Justice Department to investigate and block enforcement of state laws that restrict fossil fuel production. It specifically targets state and local policies involving climate change, environmental justice and carbon emissions reductions — popular among blue states.

[**Over 80% of Oregonians kept full Medicaid benefits after pandemic protections expired, state says**](#)

OPB | By Amelia Templeton

The Oregon Health Authority is touting its success at keeping people enrolled in Medicaid, the free government health insurance program, after program extensions granted during the pandemic ceased. Over the past two years Oregon and states across the country went through the "Medicaid unwinding," the process of figuring out who was eligible to remain on the program after government protections enacted to keep people insured during the COVID-19 pandemic ended.

In the end, more than 80% of Medicaid members kept their full benefits, according to final data from the state. Nearly 3% had their benefits reduced, and 16.9% were found ineligible and ended benefits. Those numbers [place Oregon among the top five states in the nation](#) that maintained high rates of government-funded health coverage during the unwinding.