

Oregon News

POLITICS

Oregon lawmakers make it explicit: No garbage bags for kids in foster care

OPB | By Lauren Dake

A conversation on the Senate floor on Monday pivoted from being about a measure requiring the state to provide luggage to kids in foster care rather than trash bags into a larger bipartisan discussion about why the agency charged with kids in its care has struggled for so long.

The measure, [Senate Bill 1016](#), would prevent Oregon's child welfare agency from putting kids' belongings in trash bags as they move placements and make it explicit that luggage must be provided. The measure passed the Senate and now heads to the House.

A Republican senator, Mike McLane, of Powell Butte, was also direct, saying he was bewildered Gov. Tina Kotek has not acted. "I would ask Gov. Kotek, why do we need this bill when you have complete authority to get this done? An executive order? Or a good old-fashioned dressing down of the director of DHS would have done the job."

McLane noted the incompetence of the agency had been on display for years.

Sen. Noah Robinson, a Republican from Cave Junction, said the trash bags seem to illustrate a larger problem at DHS.

"It's a symptom," he said. "If you're moving a child's belongings, you're moving a child, and we don't care enough about the child to provide them with decent carriers, that is not good. And I don't know if you can fix it by just removing the trash bags."

In and around Portland, teachers are missing more school than ever. Their bosses don't want to talk about it

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

Well before the share of students missing more than three weeks of the school year skyrocketed to [near-highest-in-the-nation levels](#) during the pandemic, Oregon was battling a high rate of chronic absenteeism.

But under the radar, a parallel absenteeism issue draws virtually no attention, except in whispers among district administrators, school financial officials and human resource leaders: A huge share of teachers are also chronically absent from class.

Unlike a handful of other states, Oregon does not require districts to report data on teacher absenteeism, as it does for students. And because each of the state's 197 school districts bargain their own union contracts, there is no universal standard for how much sick time and personal paid leave is available to educators.

Across the 10 districts, chronic absenteeism rates among teachers increased an average of 11 percentage points since 2019. Every district reported at least 36% of its teachers were missing at least that much school last year. In Portland and Centennial, frequent teacher absenteeism rates topped 60%.

There's also a financial toll. Districts from Hillsboro to Gresham told The Oregonian/OregonLive that the increased educator absences mean they must spend millions more per year on substitutes.

Legislative Leaders in Both Parties Ask FBI to Investigate the 1989 Murder of Michael Francke

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

The 1989 murder of Michael Francke, then the director of the Oregon Department of Corrections, is back in the news.

Today, House Majority Leader Ben Bowman (D-Tigard) and House Minority Leader Christine Drazan (R-Canby) wrote to FBI director Kash Patel, asking him to open an investigation into Francke's murder.

Details emerge about Oregon State Hospital leader's sudden departure

OPB | By Conrad Wilson

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek replaced the head of the Oregon State Hospital Friday night after senior state health officials shared additional details about a patient who died at the hospital last month.

Walker's departure comes as a federal judge is currently weighing whether or not to hold the facility in contempt. For years, the hospital has struggled to admit mentally ill patients charged with crimes from local jails so they can receive treatment that would allow them to continue with their case. If the state is found in contempt, the judge could require policy changes costing tens of millions of dollars per year. Public records obtained by OPB provide further details about the patient death. On March 18, a patient died in a secure room while experiencing an emergency and the "hospital's medical emergency response to the patient's loss of consciousness was not timely nor effective," according to a preliminary finding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which provides federal funding to the hospital. The Oregon Health Authority's Dave Baden has stepped in as the state hospital's acting superintendent for the next 30 days. Baden told staff Monday that the governor wants a plan that shows both her and the public "what OSH is doing around safety and care daily" and how to improve.

[Oregon State Hospital facing potential loss of accreditation following patient death](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

Public records show that, effective April 11, the hospital will now monitor patients 24/7 to alert units of any changes to a patient's condition.

Oregon State Hospital is now in danger of losing its accreditation, which would result in a loss of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.

The hospital was previously warned about the risk of losing Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement eligibility following several incidents, including three patient deaths.

House Minority Leader Rep. Christine Drazen told KATU that one solution she would like to see is more staffing at the hospital.

Drazen added that she would like to see some accountability from the Oregon State Hospital and overseeing agencies.

[Listen: Oregon Lottery marks 40 years of impact on state's economy 'without raising taxes'](#)

KOIN | By Ken Boddie

Today, 40 years and many games later, the lottery is a major source of revenue for the state, having provided more than \$16 billion for education, economic development, and other projects.

[Oregon Legislature may fund study of Willamette Valley garbage woes](#)

Statesman Journal | By Tracy Loew

The Willamette Valley is heading for a garbage crisis following the closure of the Reworld Marion [municipal waste incinerator](#) and [Coffin Butte Landfill](#)'s looming end of life, local lawmakers said Tuesday.

A bill aims to get ahead of the problem by creating a state task force to come up with regionwide solutions, the lawmakers said at a hearing on the bill.

[House Bill 3794](#) would create a 12-member task force to make recommendations about solid waste disposal regionwide and submit a report to the Legislature by the end of 2026.

[Bill hopes to stop spread of Oregon 'pharmacy deserts'](#)

Jefferson Public Radio | By Justin Higginbottom

Oregon now ranks second to last — just behind Alaska — for pharmacy access. A proposed state bill is meant to help the struggling industry.

Proposed state legislation seeks to address the dire Oregon pharmacy landscape by giving more power to drugstores when dealing with pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs. These companies, created to help customers more easily navigate buying medicine, act like middlemen between pharmacies and insurers. A PBM can decide how much a drugstore is paid for filling a prescription.

But pharmacists say that reimbursement is often too low, contributing to drug stores losing money and closing.

Oregon has lost hundreds of pharmacies in the last decade and now ranks last in the contiguous U.S. for pharmacy access, [according to the Oregon State Pharmacy Association](#).

[House Bill 3212](#) would give more bargaining power to drugstores when dealing with PBMs. For example, pharmacists would no longer be required to provide services if the reimbursement is less than the cost of those services. Harrell said pharmacies are often forced to fill prescriptions at a loss. Opponents of the bill say the new rules would increase prescription drug prices.

[Oregon lawmakers to decide whether big tech should pay to support local journalism](#)

Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes

Oregon's [faltering journalism landscape](#) could receive a significant boost if lawmakers approve a bill to require big tech companies including Google and Meta to pay money to local newsrooms and journalists. Senate Bill 686, introduced by Democratic Sen. Khanh Pham of Portland, would require large tech companies to pay at least \$122 million per year to online news outlets in Oregon for accessing their content. Alternatively, they could opt to undergo an arbitration process to determine an alternative payment amount.

The growing support for the bill raises the chances that Oregon could become one of the first states to implement a policy aimed at restoring local journalism by forcing tech giants to pay for news content. Journalism jobs in Oregon have fallen by 75% since 2001 amid declines in newspaper readership and advertisement dollars, [according to data](#) from the Oregon Employment Department. That has led to a depletion of high-quality news coverage in many rural Oregon communities and even some mid-size cities.

[Oregon NIL bill advances in Legislature; could conflict with House settlement](#)

Oregon Live | By Ryan Clarke

A bill that modifies existing Oregon law around student-athletes earning money from their Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) advanced in the state legislature last week.

On April 10, [House Bill 3694](#) passed in the Oregon House with 46 votes in favor, nine against, and five not voting. It moves to the Senate chamber, where a first reading is scheduled for Monday.

OSU athletic director Scott Barnes and some outside legal experts have [expressed skepticism](#) over the bill's potential conflict with the forthcoming [House settlement](#), which seeks to provide universal standards for NIL distribution among NCAA member institutions.

Critics of HB 3694 point out it could prevent the NCAA and conferences from enforcing limits on NIL payments — a key component of the House settlement, which would include a roughly \$20.5 million NIL "salary cap" per school.

[Oregon's House Bill 3178 would crack down on bait-and-switch auto loans](#)

Oregon Live | By Veronica Nocera

Oregon law gives auto dealers 14 days after a buyer receives their car to find an institution to finance the sale. During the two-week period, dealers can change the terms of an auto loan agreement, sometimes leaving customers with higher interest rates than promised.

[House Bill 3178](#) would shorten the window from two weeks to 10 days and require sellers to make a "good faith effort" to match negotiated terms. It would also provide customers with a disclosure document that outlines their right to void their contract without penalty if these terms are not met.

[Oregon governor joins labor, education leaders in effort to protect students from bullying, discrimination](#)

OPB | By Natalie Pate

Gov. Tina Kotek and Bureau of Labor and Industries Commissioner Christina Stephenson have announced a joint effort to protect students from bullying, discrimination and harassment based on race, national origin and immigration status in Oregon schools.

[With federal EV support uncertain, Oregon lawmakers consider revamping the state's popular rebate to prioritize lower-income buyers](#)

OPB | Monica Samayoa

[House Bill 3597](#) aims to overhaul the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's Oregon Clean Vehicle Rebate Program.

[Oregon's Clean Vehicle Rebate](#) program has rapidly grown in popularity since its inception in late 2018. It was signed into law in 2017, after the passage of House Bill 2017, which set the goal to increase battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicle sales and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector accounts for 35% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, according to DEQ.

As of April 2, [the program has issued](#) \$99.6 million in Standard and Charge Ahead rebates. The Department of Environmental Quality has issued about \$66 million in Standard Rebates, about \$9.4 million in Charge Ahead Rebates and about \$24 million in combined rebates to qualified Oregonians.

As of December 2024, there are nearly [110,000 zero-emissions vehicles registered](#) in the state, according to the Oregon Department of Energy dashboard. About 77,000 are battery electric vehicles and about 32,000 are plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

But the state EV rebate program's popularity has caused it to run out of funding for [the past two years](#), and this year the program has yet to start.

[Lawmakers push bill to prepare for major earthquake in North Portland](#)

KATU | By Tanvi Varma

Lawmakers are considering a bill that would address the dangers North Portlanders could face if hit by a major earthquake.

Lawmakers say the existing bridges are not enough to withstand a major earthquake. On Monday, the Joint Committee on Transportation considered a bill that would design a bridge across Columbia Boulevard.

[Oregon governor, congressional delegation urge feds to declare disaster for coast salmon fisheries](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

For the seventh time in less than a decade, Oregon's commercial fishermen, governor and congressional delegation are asking for federal aid to soften the blow of climate change on the state's ocean salmon fisheries.

In January, members of the Oregon Salmon Commission [asked](#) Gov. Tina Kotek to request a federal fishery resource disaster declaration from the U.S. Department of Commerce, over Oregon's poor 2024 coastal Chinook salmon season — the seventh disaster-worthy season since 2016.

Kotek [requested a disaster declaration](#) from U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick April 1, and Oregon's congressional Democrats followed up with a [letter](#) to Lutnick on Friday urging him to fulfill the request.

A disaster request allows crews of commercial fishing vessels and related businesses to be eligible for federal loans and financial assistance to keep them operating and to prevent future losses.

Oregon's commercial ocean salmon fishermen caught about 18,000 Chinook between March and October of 2024 — about 40% of the 10-year average. From 2011 to 2015, the average catch was closer to 75,000 per year, according to John North, an assistant fish division administrator with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Although there are 800 licensed, commercial salmon vessels operating in 17 ports along the Oregon Coast, only 163 vessels registered a catch in 2024, according to Reeves' letter to Kotek. Each of the last five years, those vessels have brought in an average of \$20,000 worth of catch, and the top 20 vessels have made less than \$62,000 each year for the last three years, he wrote.

[Oregon boosts wildfire response with \\$6M staffing grant](#)

KATU | By Bobby Corser

The Oregon State Fire Marshal has announced the recipients of the 2025 Wildfire Season Staffing Grant, a program now in its fourth year that aims to bolster local fire agencies' capabilities during wildfire season.

[Minimum wage will increase across Oregon in July](#)

Oregon Live / By Bobby Corser

Oregon's minimum wage will rise by 35 cents an hour on July 1, state labor officials announced Friday. The state raises its minimum wage every year to keep pace with inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. High inflation rates since the pandemic have thereby pushed the minimum wage up sharply over the past three years.

[INSIDE DOUGLAS COUNTY 4.14.25](#)

KQEN News Radio

Live from Salem, **State Senator David Brock Smith** talks about gun legislation, the Oregon Department of Transportation funding package, fire season coming up soon and more.

TRUMP

[\\$225M for Oregon in limbo after Trump cuts. What's at stake for these communities](#)

Oregon Live / By Yesenia Amaro

Some \$225 million is in limbo for communities across Oregon after the Trump administration balked at paying federal grants that include costs for a day care center, a water treatment plant and hospital upgrades.

Nearly three dozen projects in Oregon are on the chopping block for money from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Federal Emergency Management Agency. Federal officials effectively halted the grants and local leaders worry the money will never arrive in Oregon.

[As trade war heats up, here are Oregon's largest trading partners](#)

Oregon Live / By Mike Rogoway

President Donald Trump's trade war is focused on reversing the American trade deficit, reducing the money Americans spend to buy products from overseas while increasing domestic manufacturing. But some states already have a trade surplus, which means the value of their exports exceeds the value of what they buy from other countries.

That includes Oregon, [which shipped \\$34 billion in products to destinations around the world last year](#), according to federal data. It's \$6 billion more than Oregon imported in 2024.

Oregon's robust exports have long been among the state's key economic strengths, but the trade war could undercut that.

New tariffs could also [raise the cost of doing business for Oregon firms](#) that rely on products, equipment or raw materials from other countries.

The tariffs currently in force would have totaled nearly \$7 billion if levied on goods Oregon imported last year, according to state calculations, increasing the aggregate cost of those products by roughly 25%.

Oregon does more business with China than any other country, importing \$2.7 billion of Chinese products and selling nearly \$6 billion in products there. That likely reflects Oregon's large electronics manufacturing sector, which accounts for more than half the state exports.

Canada and Mexico are Oregon's next-largest trading partners, each with about \$7.1 billion in products shipped in or out.

[Trump administration launches probe into chip imports, first step toward semiconductor tariffs](#)

Associated Press

The Trump administration has taken its next steps toward imposing [more tariffs](#) on key imports, launching investigations into imports of computer chips, chip making equipment and pharmaceuticals.