

Oregon News

POLITICS

Embattled Oregon public defense director fired

Oregon Live | By Noelle Crombie

Jessica Kampfe, who has led the state's troubled public defense system, was fired Thursday by a top aide to Gov. Tina Kotek.

Kampfe served as executive director of the Oregon Public Defense Commission since 2022. A former public defender, Kampfe previously managed Multnomah Defenders Inc., a nonprofit law firm that provides defense attorneys in Portland.

"It is unacceptable that more than 4,000 defendants in Oregon do not have attorneys assigned," Kotek said in announcing the shakeup. "The public defense crisis poses an urgent threat to public safety and delays justice for victims."

Oregon wildfire funding takes legislative back seat as lawmakers grapple with federal cuts

OPB | By April Ehrlich

There's one thing about wildfires that Oregon lawmakers seem to agree on: The state needs to find new ways to cover its increasingly expensive wildfire costs.

Yet halfway through this year's legislative session, lawmakers' momentum toward a funding solution seems to be petering out, and the proposals they've put forward so far are barely breathing.

[House Bill 3940](#) — a mashup of multiple funding proposals, including one that would add a surcharge to bottles purchased in the state — sits in a revenue committee. So does [Senate Bill 1177](#), which would pull some money from Oregonians' tax rebate known as "the kicker" and invest it into a trust. Then there's a [joint resolution](#) that would redirect some lottery revenues.

There's a chance these funding proposals will move forward through the remaining months of this long legislative session. But there's also a strong possibility that the session ends without new funding for wildfire prevention and firefighting costs — leaving Oregon's fire agencies once again vulnerable to falling into financial deficit, and unable to pay their bills.

As Oregon Pushes Back Against A Federal K-12 Education Order, What Does It Stand to Lose?

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

By pushing back on a Trump administration attempt to curtail diversity, equity and inclusion in K-12 programming, Oregon risks losing about 7%—or \$735.7 million—of its dollars that go toward public schools.

Bill to end maddening protections for unwelcome squatters earns broad support

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

She's won widespread support for the proposal to close legal loopholes by allowing landlords and homeowners to launch eviction proceedings against squatters, instead of winding through what Hartman says is a much slower process called ejectment. Her bill passed the House of Representatives [unanimously earlier this month](#) and has drawn support from property owners and tenants rights advocates.

Squatters occupy a gray area under Oregon law. In order to evict someone, a landlord must have proof that they have forcibly entered a property or they have to have established a landlord-tenant relationship Hartman said — basically having their name on a lease.

Squatters who may have been invited onto a property by then-legal tenants but who have no relationship with the property owner — like those in Garcia's example — are more challenging to remove.

Proposal to impose penalties on private utilities delaying wildfire lawsuits quietly moves forward

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Three years later, PacifiCorp — owner of Oregon private utility Pacific Power — was found by a jury to have been reckless and negligent in causing that fire and three others. In January 2024, a jury ordered

the utility company to pay millions in damages to Cuozzo and nine other survivors, among the first group in an ongoing class action lawsuit.

[Senate Bill 926](#), sponsored by state Sen. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford, and co-sponsored by Democratic state Sens. Jeff Golden of Ashland and James Manning of Eugene, would impose some consequences on PacifiCorp, and the state's two other investor-owned utilities, for delaying settlements and prolonging litigation if they are found to have recklessly or negligently caused a wildfire.

On April 8, the Senate Judiciary Committee's four Democrats voted to pass it out of the committee and onto the Senate floor, recommending they also vote yes. The committee's two Republicans opposed the bill. The larger Senate vote has not yet been scheduled.

Senate Bill 926 would prohibit Oregon's private investor-owned utilities from recovering wildfire lawsuit costs from ratepayers — including fines, fees and settlements — if the company was found by a court or jury to have acted recklessly or negligently in causing the fire. It would also prohibit companies from raising rates to pay for repairing or replacing wildfire-damaged infrastructure if the company is found by court or jury to have been at fault for the fire.

[Oregon lawmakers push for transparency with bill limit proposal](#)

KATU | By Sana Aljobory

A bipartisan group of Oregon legislators has introduced [House Bill 2006](#), aiming to streamline the legislative process by limiting the number of bills introduced each session.

The measure seeks to enhance transparency and public access in order to make it easier for the public, advocates, and the press to track legislative priorities.

[New measure aims to rein in bills flooding Oregon Legislature](#)

OPB | By Bryce Dole

House Bill 2006, which was proposed this week, would make it so lawmakers can only propose 25 bills in a long legislative session. It is sponsored by a bipartisan group of legislators.

Most bills die, but it takes time for legislative staff to review them. Many are initially known as "study bills," or placeholders for future bills that might not even materialize, "making it difficult for the public to know which bills are likely to be considered by lawmakers," the press release said.

Tim Knopp, a former Republican member of the Oregon Senate, also supports the bill, saying in a Wednesday statement that "unlimited bill drafting is having a negative impact."

[Too many bills, too little time: Oregon lawmakers propose limiting legislators to 25 bills apiece](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

[Evans told The Oregonian/OregonLive earlier this year](#) that he files numerous bills because he thinks "everyone's opinions" about how to address the ills of society deserves to be heard in the "laboratory of democracy." **Brock Smith** said with Republicans in the minority, he believes drafting bills to air his and his constituents ideas is sometimes the only way they get heard.

A number of Republicans, however, say they don't agree with arguments that limiting bills curtails free speech. [Sen. Dick Anderson](#), a Republican from Lincoln City, is one of them, said his chief of staff, Bryan Iverson. Restricting lawmakers to 25 bills apiece "is plenty to get the job done," Iverson said.

[Oregon Senate passes bill protecting Oregonians who alert others of their rights](#)

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

The Oregon Senate passed a bill on Tuesday that would protect Oregonians who alert others of their constitutional rights without being found guilty of interfering with law enforcement.

Under Senate Bill 1191, the act of informing someone about these rights does not qualify as a crime of preventing law enforcement from carrying out their duties, obstructing the government or judicial processes.

The lone vote against the bill was cast by **Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles)**. KOIN 6 News reached out to Sen. Bonham's office for statements on his vote. This story will be updated if we receive a response.

[Complaint requesting prosecution of St. Helens Mayor heads to Oregon DOJ](#)

KOIN | By Joelle Jones

The complaint obtained by KOIN 6 News accuses Mayor Jennifer Massey of corruption and alleges she colluded with [ex-Police Chief Brian Greenway](#) to get rid of 24-hour police coverage in an attempt to aid her mayoral race campaign.

[Oregon House passes legislation tied to KATU Investigation into permitting requirements](#)

KATU | By Wright Gazaway

The Oregon House overwhelmingly passed a bill supporters said would save money for housing developers and small businesses while making it easier to develop projects.

The legislation is a direct result of a KATU investigation into permit requirements in Portland. Our investigation found the city put sidewalk and street corner improvements on a small business owner as a condition of a building permit, despite a planned state project covering much of the same work.

[Oregon lawmakers vote to limit rent increases for manufactured home owners](#)

OPB | By Lauren Dake

The debate in the Oregon House on Wednesday over whether to cap rent increases on manufactured homes fell along familiar dividing lines; Republicans called for fewer regulations and a focus on housing supply, while Democrats cautioned the measure was necessary to keep vulnerable seniors housed. Republicans showed up to the House floor prepared to fight.

"It seems like this body is passing bills that make housing more expensive and then we see expensive housing," said Republican Ed Diehl, of Scio. "Then we say, 'Oh we need to respond to that.'" And so we do rate caps. It's like we are in this housing doom loop."

Diehl said he wants to see vulnerable seniors remain in their manufactured homes, but the solution, he said, is to build more houses, not add more constraints.

[Senators denounce Trump's defiance of court orders on deportations to El Salvador](#)

KATU | By Sana Aljobory

Oregon senators raised alarms over what they describe as a constitutional crisis, urging Americans to defend civil liberties and due process against rising authoritarianism.

[Senator Lew Frederick](#) of Portland condemned the administration's actions as "evil," citing the White House's refusal to abide by the Supreme Court decision.

[Oregon unemployment saw an uptick in March](#)

OPB | By Rachael McDonald

Oregon's unemployment rate ticked up last month to 4.6%. According to the Oregon Employment Department, the rate has been rising gradually over the past year.

It was 4.1% in March 2024.

[A 6-figure salary might not be enough in Portland OR](#)

KOIN | By Andrew Foran

A \$100,000 salary might seem massive, especially in a [state with one of the lowest median salaries in the U.S.](#), but according to a new report, it may not be enough to scrape by for a family of three in Portland.

A [new report by LendingTree](#) found that there are 25 large metros in the U.S. where a six-figure salary isn't enough to cut it for a family of three, meaning two adults and a child, and Portland made the list. On average, the report said that Portlanders spend the most on housing, followed by child care and transportation.

[An Old Town Shoe Incubator Gets Remainder of State Funding](#)

Willamette Week | By Sophie Peel

An ambitious project to transform a portion of Old Town into a shoe manufacturing campus will receive the remaining \$800,000 in state funds it was promised last year by the Oregon Legislature, after Gov. Tina Kotek called for greater scrutiny of its financial viability last month.

In the spring of 2024, the Legislature approved a \$2 million grant to Made in Old Town, an ambitious plan for a nine-building shoe manufacturing hub and innovation center in Portland's toughest neighborhood. The project is led by a group of men, some of whom are executives from the footwear industry.

[OR child care crisis: Bill would allow child care centers to open in more spaces](#)

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

The Oregon House passed a bill on Monday that would expand the types of locations where child care centers could open across the state.

Under [House Bill 3560](#), child care centers could open in more areas such as residential neighborhoods, commercial districts and some industrial zones. The bill would also allow child care facilities to co-locate with community institutions including, schools, libraries, public parks, civic centers and churches.

[Statewide AFSCME Director Faces Challenger](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

After two years in a top job at one of Oregon's most powerful labor unions, Joe Baessler faces a fellow union member who would like his job.

"The people I've devoted my political life to could fire me in a month," Joe Baessler says in an interview.

[Too much communication: For cell phones in schools, simpler may be better](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Randy Stapilus

What do you do with legislation that cuts into the middle of how Oregonians live their lives, when most people want it but many are sharply opposed?

The short answer: Test it, when that's possible. Launch a suggested solution, but keep specifics general enough that details emerge through trial and error. That can mean requiring local governments to act but encouraging them to become the laboratories where we learn what works well or not.

Today's subject is cell phone use in schools, during school hours, for which Oregon [House Bill 2251](#) passed the House on a mostly party-line 36-21 vote this week. It is aimed at banning cell phone use throughout the school day, and for the moment, it seems well positioned to become law.

A House committee already considered more than a half-dozen amendments and more are expected in the Senate, but the suggestion here is to simplify.

This is one of the hottest subjects this year in the Oregon legislature. It goes right to the heart of how Oregon's school children and their parents have been accustomed to organizing their days.

[County commissioner pitches new plan to ease Portland's mental health crisis](#)

Oregon Live | By Austin De Dios

Multnomah County Commissioner Meghan Moyer is asking the state for \$1.75 million to fund a task force dedicated to connecting people with severe mental illness to [Medicaid-funded](#) treatment.

[Moyer](#) said her plan, which she brought before the county board Tuesday, would fill a significant gap in the county's support services for people with debilitating mental illness and keep people with chronic conditions off the streets, out of hospitals and away from jail.

FEDERAL

[Oregon business leaders share concerns about Trump's tariffs](#)

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

Business leaders from around Oregon shared the impacts of new tariffs with Gov. Tina Kotek and Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner on April 16, saying they fear widespread challenges.

According to [The Budget Lab at Yale](#), "the 2025 tariffs disproportionately affect clothing and textiles, with consumers facing 87% higher shoe prices and 65% higher apparel prices in the short-run."

[Gov. Kotek, Oregon business leaders meet to discuss local impacts of Trump tariffs](#)

KATU

Gov. Tina Kotek and Oregon business leaders met on Wednesday for a roundtable discussion on the local impacts of President Donald Trump's tariff policy.

Oregon State Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner said that tariffs are detrimental to the financial well-being and security of individuals, families, and businesses.

Based on her department's financial wellness scorecard, published in January, 50% of Oregon families cannot find \$500 for an emergency. She says the cost of tariffs on families will be much higher.

"Economists estimate that the tariffs that have been imposed by the Trump administration would impact families on an average of \$3,800 per year. If they can't find \$500 for an emergency, how will they find an additional \$3,800 to pay for essentials?" said Steiner.

[Tariffs will do lasting damage to Oregon's trade relationships, businesses tell governor](#)

OPB | By Kyra Buckley

McIlroy was among a number of business representatives ranging from fishing to winemaking to apparel who told Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek that tariffs are hurting their businesses. At a roundtable in Salem on Wednesday, companies said the changes to international trade are happening too fast, and in many cases there's no domestic alternative for the imported parts and goods.

[Oregon companies suffering under Trump tariffs, consumers next, business leaders tell governor](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Many of the businesses have paid millions on imports since April 9, they told Kotek, when Trump issued a 10% import tariff on nearly all goods coming into the U.S.

For other Oregon businesses, it's retaliatory tariffs that could sink the ships.

Oregon consumers will pick up much of the tab for tariffs, according to federal and state economists.

Kotek was joined by State Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner, who said federal economists estimate Trump's tariffs will cost the average U.S. household \$3,800 more per year. The Treasury's statewide "[financial wellness scorecard](#)" published in January found the average Oregon family does not have an extra \$500 available to cover emergencies.

"If they can't find \$500 for an emergency, how will they find an additional \$3,800 to pay for essentials?" she said.

[Gov Kotek to US Education Dept: 'Not changing how we work in Oregon'](#)

KOIN | By Ariel Jacobazzi

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek doubled down Tuesday on her directive to Oregon schools last week to ignore the Trump Administration's demands to cut diversity-equity-inclusion programs or lose federal funding.

[Federal education cuts and Trump DEI demands leave states, teachers in limbo](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Robbie Sequeira

But states across the country, both liberal- and conservative-led, are worried about losing other aid: the pandemic-era money that in some cases they've already spent or committed to spending.

The Department of Education has long played a critical role in distributing federal funds to states for K-12 education, including Title I grants to boost staffing in schools with high percentages of low-income students, and emergency relief like that provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conservative-led states — particularly Mississippi, South Dakota and Arkansas — rely the most heavily on these funds to sustain services in high-need districts.

The 15 states with the highest percentage of their K-12 budget coming from federal funding in fiscal year 2022 — the latest year with data available from the National Center for Education Statistics — voted for Trump in the 2024 presidential election. Similarly, 10 of the 15 states receiving the highest amounts of Title I funding in fiscal year 2024 also voted for Trump.

[Less food, more need at Southern Oregon food banks after federal funding cuts](#)

OPB | By Jane Vaughn

The USDA [recently cut](#) more than \$1 billion in funding for food banks and schools.

Food banks in Oregon are seeing [historic levels of need](#).

[Trump signs executive action to lower drug prices](#)

OPB | By Sydney Lupkin

President Trump signed an executive action Tuesday intended to lower prescription drug prices for Americans.

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters ahead of the signing that the move would include “delivering lower prices to seniors” and improve the [Medicare drug price negotiation program](#), which was created by the Inflation Reduction Act that passed in 2022.

HOMELESSNESS

[How new Multnomah County data explains the region’s homelessness crisis](#)

OPB | By Alex Zieinski

A new trove of data on Multnomah County’s homeless population dropped this week, offering the public an updated and more accurate understanding of the region’s homelessness crisis. The results will undoubtedly shape the future of the region’s homeless response.

The [first report](#) focuses on numbers shared by all publicly funded shelters on how long people are staying in shelter, how swiftly people are leaving shelter to enter permanent housing, and other metrics. This report was overseen and presented by Multnomah County Commissioner Shannon Singleton at a county meeting Tuesday.

The [second report](#) comes from the county’s new process for tracking people experiencing homelessness in the region. Called a “by-name list,” this system released Wednesday collects information on anyone who touches the county or city’s homeless services, whether that’s staying in a shelter, interacting with an outreach worker, or moving into permanent housing. As the name suggests, the county is able to track people by their name and location — whether that be a tent or a shelter bed.

For years, local government has collected population data on its homeless residents through the biennial “[point-in-time count](#),” where volunteers collect data on where people experiencing homelessness slept on one single January evening. It’s a form of data collection that the federal government requires jurisdictions collect to receive funding. But local public officials have long considered that number unreliable, and called for more precise data.

[More people becoming homeless than housed in Multnomah Co: new data](#)

KATU | By Christina Giardinelli

People are becoming homeless at a higher rate than Multnomah County’s homeless services is able to move people out of homelessness.

This data point, newly released in a [dashboard](#), is at the crux of why millions of tax dollars going towards homeless services do not appear to be making a dent in the crisis.

“What we see is that people are entering homelessness faster than we are putting people in housing,” said Anna Plumb, Multnomah County’s Homeless Services Department deputy director during a homeless services [Steering and Oversight Committee meeting](#).

[What Portland area officials say they’ll do differently with ‘alarming’ new homelessness data](#)

Oregon Live | By Lillian Mongeau Hughes

New data [released Wednesday by Multnomah County](#) officials show a stunning local reality: 14,824 people living in the county were homeless as of February. Of those, 6,796 people were living outside, in a vehicle or in some other place considered unfit for human habitation.

[Officials now have a much better idea of how many homeless people live in Multnomah County. It’s a lot](#)

Oregon Live | By Lillian Mongeau Hughes

Multnomah County officials released a detailed [data dashboard](#) Wednesday that captures the size, demographics and housing status of the area’s constantly fluctuating homeless population [for the first time](#).

County officials say it is the most [comprehensive list](#) they’ve ever had. It’s also the longest.

According to the new data, 14,864 people were homeless in Portland in February. That's nearly 3,000 more than the county estimated had been homeless in January 2024, a jump county officials attribute in part to their improved data collection work.