

Oregon News

POLITICS

Oregon lawmakers consider gun control bills amid legal battle over Measure 114

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alan Cohen

As legal challenges to a voter-approved gun control law continue, Oregon lawmakers are considering a set of additional restrictions on gun purchases that are among the most controversial measures of the legislative session.

[House Bill 3075](#), sponsored by Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, would codify Measure 114's ban on magazines with 10 or more rounds, provide a 180-day grace period for owners to dispose of their high-capacity magazines and increase maximum permit fees from \$65 to \$150 and maximum renewal fees from \$50 to \$110. It would also increase the maximum time authorities have to make a decision from 30 to 60 days from the date of the permit request.

The bill, like Measure 114, would also close the "Charleston loophole," named after a 2015 shooting at a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina. The shooter, a self-admitted white supremacist, was ineligible to purchase a gun because of a drug charge but was allowed to buy one anyway because authorities took more than three business days to conduct a background check. If the bill is adopted or Measure 114 takes effect, background checks would have to be completed before authorities grant any permits.

[House Bill 3076](#), also sponsored by Kropf and other Democrats, would establish a state-level licensing system for gun dealers. They currently have to be licensed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a process that involves fingerprinting, background checks and an interview, according to the [ATF website](#). If the bill passes, Oregon would join 16 other states that require dealers to obtain an additional state-level license to sell firearms.

A [2024 study](#) from the [Alliance for a Safe Oregon](#) found that most guns used for crimes in Oregon came from legal gun dealers, and the average gun dealer in the state is inspected by ATF only once every ten years.

[Senate Bill 243](#) would introduce a mandatory 72-hour minimum waiting period from when a permit is requested to when it can be granted. It is meant to discourage impulsive purchases, which have been linked to higher rates of gun suicides and several mass shooting incidents including the 2022 shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Currently 10 states, including California and Washington, have waiting periods of up to 10 days before gun purchases.

Most gun rights groups in Oregon oppose the bill. The 72-hour waiting period constitutes an "unnecessary delay for law-abiding citizens who wish to exercise their right to bear arms" and could "create logistical challenges for gun dealers and buyers, leading to potential economic impacts on small businesses," according to Rick Coufal, a firearms instructor and member of the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action who submitted [written testimony](#) against the bill.

Republican lawmakers have also introduced legislation to make obtaining firearms easier, including a [joint resolution](#) to enshrine the right to carry concealed firearms into the Oregon constitution. A group of bipartisan legislators has also introduced [a bill](#) to allow them and their staff to carry concealed firearms in the Capitol building.

Commentary: Project labor agreements a giant "keep out" sign for women and minority-owned contractors

Oregon Capital Chronicle

Late last year, Governor Tina Kotek issued an executive order requiring union labor on nearly every state construction project. Known as "project labor agreements," her order is a giant "keep out" sign for non-union businesses like ours – eliminating the opportunity for 80% of Oregon's construction companies from working on projects funded with our own tax dollars.

But why? It's not to save money. Every contractor working on public construction projects is already required to pay prevailing wages on government projects, meaning everyone competes on a level playing field.

Further, project labor agreements would prevent hundreds of women and minority owned businesses from getting construction contracts. It's why the National Association of Minority Contractors of Oregon oppose the governor's executive order, as do dozens of other Oregon contracting and small business organizations.

The real reason for the order is that union bosses are calling the shots again. And just like in the old days, they don't want to see us succeed.

So when politicians tip the scales in favor of well-heeled special interests, we're going to call them on the carpet. Open and fair competition is critical for a healthy and equitably construction industry. Union and non-union contractors should all have a fair opportunity to work on taxpayer funded construction projects across our state.

[Hands off 'Fluffy and Fido': Oregon bill would ban publicly funded experiments on cats and dogs](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A bill that would prohibit public money from funding lab experimentation on cats and dogs for the benefit of humans is making its way through the Oregon Legislature.

The protect "Fluffy and Fido" bill, as one senator has dubbed it, cruised to passage on the Senate floor with a 24-3 vote last week and is now in the hands of the House. Senate Bill 181 would ban public funding of any experiments on domesticated felines or canines if it doesn't benefit their species and causes them pain.

Supporters of the [Senate Bill 181](#) say they know of only one entity in the state — Oregon Health & Science University — that is currently conducting research on dogs and for the sole benefit of humans. That research, however, is privately funded so it won't be affected by the bill. The bill's supporters also say they know of no organizations that are doing such research on cats.

Oregon's bill received a warm reception in the Senate Judiciary Committee, winning over **even Sen. Mike McLane, an eastern Oregon Republican**, who initially expressed worries that research on cats and dogs might be necessary to save human lives.

McLane said he was "troubled" that the bill might eliminate "research that could be critical for human benefit." But he added that he doesn't "celebrate" research that amounts to "nothing but cruelty" toward society's most beloved animal companions.

[Sen. Kim Thatcher](#), a Republican from Keizer, tried to allay McLane's worries.

"It just bans testing on dogs and cats," Thatcher said. "And still allows it under private funding. It just protects Fluffy and Fido."

[Oregon bills aim to change how Public Utility Commission sets rates](#)

Statesman Journal | By Bill Poehler

According to statistics compiled by the Oregon Citizens Utility Board, a nonprofit that advocates for consumers, more than 150,000 Oregonians had their utilities cut off in 2024 by for-profit utility companies.

[Pacific Power customers](#) have seen rates go up by 56% since 2021, Portland General Electric customers are paying 49% more and Northwest Natural customers are paying 39% more.

Eight bills in the Oregon Legislature would change how the Oregon Public Utility Commission sets rates for investor-owned utilities.

[Oregon housing crisis: Bill aims to ease real estate squeeze](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

A bill to accelerate and grow middle housing — duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes and cottage clusters — would strip away some barriers to building those homes by eliminating things such as public notices and traffic impact studies.

Building middle housing on unincorporated land within urban growth boundaries and lots with existing single-family homes, for example, also would no longer be restricted.

[House Bill 2138](#) is a priority for Gov. Tina Kotek, who said it simplifies permitting and addresses other barriers to residential construction, which is crucial to easing the statewide housing crisis.

Some, however, worry the proposal could have unintended consequences for cities grappling with congestion and implementing additional new land-use laws.

[Search the PERS database: Check out how much Oregon government retirees receive in pension pay](#)
Oregon Live | By Ted Sickinger, Mark Friesen

The Oregonian/OregonLive has updated its [searchable database of beneficiaries of the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System](#), adding 5,947 beneficiaries who retired last year and another 118 who retired Jan. 1, 2025.

Earlier this month, the newsroom analyzed the newest class of beneficiaries, finding that [some retirees are still scoring huge pensions](#) thanks to a costly retirement formula that's been minting millionaires for decades. Although lawmakers made reforms, government employees who started working before 1996 are generally eligible for a favorable calculation that has been a primary driver of PERS' massive pension deficit, which now stands at \$30 billion.

Pensions for beneficiaries who retired in 2024 ranged from about \$1,000 annually to nearly \$330,000, with a median of \$23,297, according to a newsroom analysis. The median benefit for 2024 retirees with 30 or more years, which PERS defines as a career employee, was \$57,832 annually.

[More Oregonians are holding down multiple jobs](#)

Oregon Live | By Mike Rogoway

The share of Oregonians working two or more jobs has risen rapidly over the past two years to its highest point in more than a decade.

About 6% of Oregon workers are holding down multiple jobs, according to the latest state and federal data, about 1 in 16 workers overall. The share of Oregonians working multiple jobs has been up in each of the last two years.

Oregon incomes used to be much lower than the national average, and its poverty rate used to be much higher. The state has erased the income gap over the past two decades, and the [poverty rate has fallen even faster in Oregon than it has nationally](#).

[Editorial: Portland City Council misses the forest for the trees](#)

The Oregonian

The meeting – in which Forest Park neighbors and advocates were appealing Portland General Electric's [plan to expand transmission capacity](#) at the northern edge of the park – included familiar themes of climate resilience and accusations of corporate profiteering. Although neighbors decried the project, which would require cutting about 370 trees on five acres within PGE's existing right-of-way, the electric company emphasized the long-established need to add capacity and strengthen the power grid. Considering the city's push to increase electrification, PGE's extensive mitigation plan and the project's impact on less than one tenth of 1% of Forest Park, councilors, it seemed, had a clear set of facts on which to build their case for leadership.

Spoiler alert: They did not.

Instead, councilors [unanimously voted to overturn the decision](#) of a city hearings officer who – after exhaustively reviewing PGE's proposal and neighbors' objections to the plan – had [determined the project to be necessary](#) and the “least environmentally detrimental option.”

[Readers respond: Virtual charter school students deserve equal funding](#)

Commentary | Oregon Live

There are [approximately 15,000 Oregon public school students](#) enrolled in [virtual charter schools](#). Oregon [House Bill 2583](#) was a bill that would have allowed these students to have equal access to

Oregon Student Success Act funding for credit recovery, math remediation, early literacy programs, social-emotional learning support, counseling programs and more.

HB 2583 had garnered bipartisan and constituent support and had a highly successful [public hearing on April 2](#). At the public hearing there were 141 submitted testimonies in support of this bill, coming from all areas of Oregon, including more than 20 rural Oregon districts and 62 Oregon towns.

Ten minutes before the work session began, Committee Chairwoman Courtney Neron removed it from the agenda, thus killing the bill which had to be moved out of committee to meet the Legislature's deadline.

[Listen: Oregon House Speaker talks about bill to stop more bills after session sets record](#)

KGW

The session set a record of roughly 3,400 bills filed, and Speaker Julie Fahey said the bill would make it easier for people to give their input on topics.

[New State Figures Show Wood Products Industry Remains Key Part of Oregon's Economy](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

New data from the Oregon Employment Department show that although wood product manufacturing jobs are far fewer than they were three decades ago, they remain an important part of the state's economy.

"Even with the long-term decline, wood product manufacturing is still a large industry in Oregon," wrote OED economist Brian Rooney in an April 18 report. "In 2024, there were 22,400 jobs and roughly \$1.5 billion in total payroll in the industry."

Wood products manufacturing, which includes sawmills, plywood and engineered wood products, millwork and prefab buildings, is particularly important in Oregon counties, such as Curry (11.7% of payroll) and Douglas (8.4%).

[OR timber: Oregon groups raise concerns over Trump admin's logging plans](#)

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

The Trump administration is taking steps to boost logging in national forests across the United States, raising some concerns for organizations in Oregon.

On March 1, President Donald Trump signed an [executive order](#) directing the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, along with the Forest Service, to issue new guidance on increasing timber production and wildfire resiliency in national forests.

Following the order, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins issued a [memo](#) on April 3, designating an "emergency situation" on national forest lands — opening logging on nearly 60% of Forest Service land, or 176,000 square miles across the United States.

[Environmentalists sue Trump administration over 'cute little newt' at Crater Lake](#)

Oregon Live | By Jamie Hale

The Center for Biological Diversity on Thursday [announced its intention](#) to file a lawsuit over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to protect the Crater Lake newt, also known as the Mazama newt, which the environmental organization said is "critically imperiled."

[Best, worst small Oregon cities for business, according to WalletHub analysis](#)

KOIN | By Kaitlin Flanigan

Thinking of starting a small business? According to a new analysis from WalletHub, there are certain smaller cities in Oregon that could offer a better chance of success than others.

In fact, two of Oregon's small cities are in the top 10 small cities for starting a business in the United States, according to WalletHub's ["Best and Worst Small Cities to Start a Business"](#) analysis. Overall, 15 small Oregon cities made the list.

Cracking the top 10 were the cities of Bend and Redmond, coming in at No. 7 and No. 8, respectively. The next city's ranking? No. 532, and that went to Medford. Meanwhile, the lowest-ranked small city was Springfield, Oregon, coming in at No. 1,095.

[Trump's tariffs drive up homebuilding costs amid Oregon's housing crisis](#)

OPB | By Kyra Buckley

"When the tariffs hit, it made it almost cost-prohibitive for us to use that," Drobot said. "So what it then made us pivot to was just old-fashioned domestic plywood, which is more expensive, but we don't have another choice. In that specific example, a tariff directly caused us to pivot our supply chain to source a domestic input, which is going to increase the price of homes."

The tariffs come as Oregon's homelessness crisis is beyond emergency level. Many factors contribute to the catastrophe, but experts say the root cause is a statewide [lack of available affordable housing](#). In Coos Bay, researchers say [the city needs at least 600 new homes by 2040](#) to meet the area's needs.

[Trump's tariffs and his trade war's 'sobering' impact on Oregon small businesses: Beat Check podcast](#)

Oregon Live | By Joe Freeman

In Oregon's trade-dependent economy, the tariffs are particularly [tough on the footwear and apparel industry](#), which uses factories in Asia. And while business giants like Nike and Columbia are plotting to stay afloat, the dramatic shift in policy is potentially [crippling for thousands of small businesses](#) in the state, which don't have as much financial flexibility and muscle.

What's the mood among Oregon's small business owners? How are they coping? And what does the future look like?

On the latest episode of [Beat Check](#), reporter [Matthew Kish](#), who covers business for The Oregonian/OregonLive, breaks down the impact of Trump's tariffs on Oregon small businesses.

[Washington state Senate unleashes \\$12B tax blitz, defying governor's warnings](#)

OPB

Major pieces of a \$12 billion tax package passed the Washington state Senate on Saturday without a clear sign that Gov. Bob Ferguson supports them.

Democratic senators used their near supermajority to override Republican opposition, approving bills to expand the capital gains tax, increase tax rates on large corporations and big banks, and begin collecting sales tax on an array of services.