

## **Oregon Sen. Aaron Woods dies at 75**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway*

Oregon state Sen. Aaron Woods, D-Wilsonville, died on Saturday at age 75, Senate Democrats said Monday morning.

Woods was elected in 2022. He grew up on the south side of Chicago and served six years in the U.S. Army's strategic communications before an honorable discharge at the rank of specialist, according to his legislative and campaign biographies.

Woods kept a rather low profile at the Capitol but was praised in his Wilsonville-based district for his commitment to local issues. A series of [letters from voters](#) showcased on his campaign website discussed his commitment to making the city a welcoming community and advocating for its needs.

Republican Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said Woods expressed absolute optimism that he would beat cancer, and that Bonham believed him.

"I have nothing but bad words for cancer," Bonham said. "Just a wonderful man that's gone far too soon. He will be missed in committees. He will be missed on the floor. He'll be missed in his office. He'll be missed in the community."

Woods was surrounded by family when he died. He is survived by five adult children who live in Denver area, while his wife, Shirley, predeceased him.

Local Democratic party officials will select between three and five candidates to finish Woods' term.

County commissioners from Clackamas, Washington and Yamhill counties will pick from that list.

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

## **Oregon Republican lawmakers tiptoe around Trump administration's tariffs, their impact on Oregon**

*Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes*

While Democrats in the Legislature have loudly condemned Trump's efforts to slash federal programs, fire federal workers and [place stiff tariffs](#) on other countries, their Republican counterparts have avoided taking a strong public stance on many of those actions.

Out of 10 Republican lawmakers interviewed by The Oregonian/OregonLive for this article, nearly all said they support various aspects or potential effects of Trump's trade policies. But almost none outright said whether they support the tariffs.

Oregon Republican lawmakers have publicly said little about the tariffs. Most of those interviewed said they are waiting for the effects of tariffs to materialize before weighing in.

Although many business owners in trade-dependent Oregon have said tariffs will [soon force them](#) to raise prices, these lawmakers said they aren't so sure.

Even lawmakers who largely align with Trump's agenda and support tariffs did not say they believe Oregon will benefit from them.

"I do generally support tariffs ... (but) I don't know enough about it to say for sure that I know what all the effects will be," said **Sen. Noah Robinson of Cave Junction**. "The people doing this are studying it very carefully. So it's hard for me to support or oppose any particular tariff at any particular point in time."

Numerous other Republican lawmakers also would not directly say whether they support tariffs, but none openly criticized Trump or his trade policies. Several of them instead said they appreciate Trump's underlying motivation to boost manufacturing in the United States or hailed his ability as a negotiator. And multiple Republican lawmakers acknowledged that Oregonians might feel some short-term pain, but they said they are confident that Trump would appropriately respond if necessary.

"If the day comes that people are saying, 'Here's the negative impact, and you better reverse course,' I know him well enough, in my opinion, to say that he would reverse course," said **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham of The Dalles**.

Many Republican lawmakers are likely avoiding criticizing Trump's policies due to fear of retribution from his administration or massive pushback from their conservative constituents, said Chris Shortell, political science professor at Portland State University.

Meanwhile, several Republicans said they have had little reason or time to worry about the tariffs. **Sen. Bruce Starr of Dundee** said he's too busy pushing back against Democratic-sponsored tax proposals in the Legislature to pay much attention to the tariff conversations.

#### [Oregon's Short School Years Worsen Effects of Chronic Absenteeism](#)

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

A Stand for Children Oregon analysis finds the state's short elementary school year makes chronic absenteeism more consequential for its students than others nationwide.

The analysis by the education advocacy nonprofit uses National Center for Education Statistics data from 2020 that outlines the minimum number of instructional hours each state requires. While the average minimum instructional hours in the U.S. is 975 a year (calculated to account for elementary-level minimum hours), that number for Oregon students in elementary school is about 900. That means Oregon students automatically lose about 75 hours of instructional time each year compared with students nationwide.

An Oregon student who is chronically absent by the minimum standard starting in first grade will have missed at least 659 hours of school compared with the average U.S. student with perfect attendance by the end of fourth grade. That's nearly 75% of an Oregon school year.

This legislative session, House Bill 3199, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Rep. Hoa Nguyen (D-East Portland) and **Sen. Suzanne Weber (R-Tillamook)** asks for a state-commissioned study on attendance initiatives that would help inform a new statewide policy to improve attendance. It has not yet passed either chamber, but passed out of the House Committee on Education.

#### [Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek backs Salem livability levy, concept of state payment to capital city](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway*

Oregon governor and Salem resident Tina Kotek plans to vote for a temporary new property tax levy that aims to keep the city's library, parks and senior center open as the capital city faces a \$14 million budget gap.

Kotek told reporters Monday that she will support the levy, which would charge property owners 98 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or about \$229 annually for the average Salem homeowner. She said she hoped other residents would join her.

Kotek, who lives in the state-owned governor's mansion, Mahonia Hall, wouldn't pay the new levy if voters approve it. The state government doesn't pay property taxes, which is part of the reason Salem's in such dire financial straits. About 8% of property in the city is owned by the state government, and the city provides resources like police and fire response to those properties but can't collect taxes from it. It's a tough year for budget requests, as lawmakers brace for cuts to federal spending and the impact of tariffs. But Andersen stressed that his \$7 million request is small compared to the state's budget.

"\$7 million, we can find that in the legislative couches," Andersen said.

#### [Oregon leaders go to bat for ballpark but skeptics say 'the finances don't make a lot of sense'](#)

*Oregon Live | By Mike Rogoway*

But Scherzinger, who had a long career crunching numbers for public agencies at every level of Oregon government, says the numbers being tossed around to fund a prospective major league stadium don't add up.

"I just don't see how it pencils out. Maybe they know something I don't know, but they're not saying what that is," said Scherzinger, who ran Oregon's Legislative Revenue Office for 14 years.

The Portland Diamond Project plans to divert income taxes from players' salaries to repay bonds, aiming to generate \$800 million toward the cost of a \$2 billion ballpark at the west end of the Tilikum Crossing.

Their proposal is [racing through the state Legislature](#) with bipartisan support and backing from Oregon's governor, Portland's mayor, the state treasurer, Multnomah County officials and many in the private sector. They note the money would come from taxes on players – not from city coffers or the state's general fund – and assert the project wouldn't cost the public anything.

Scherzinger says he's concerned the ballpark's backers are overestimating how much money the players will earn and underestimating the interest rates the bond will have to pay.

If there are reasons to doubt Portland's major league prospects, though, Scherzinger said Oregon doesn't have a lot to lose by trying. [Senate Bill 110](#) commits no public funds beyond those generated directly by income taxes levied on players and a team's staff, so he said the Legislature should push ahead and challenge the project's backers to find a way to resolve the economic and logistical impediments.

#### [OLCC manager who diverted bottles of Elmer T. Lee bourbon back on the job](#)

*Oregon Live | By Noelle Crombie*

An [Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission](#) middle manager who diverted sought-after [Elmer T. Lee bourbon](#) for himself, a colleague and [his bosses](#) is back on the job after two years on leave, according to records and agency officials.

He had been on leave — a mix of paid administrative leave, personal leave and vacation — since March 17, 2023. The agency did not provide a detailed breakdown of the leave, which added up to \$257,859 in salary over the two years.

Commission records show Flemming was the subject of a human resources investigation, which substantiated five allegations that he diverted [highly coveted bourbon](#), mostly Elmer T. Lee.

The arrangements spelled out in the investigation underscore the longstanding culture within OLCC that allowed well-connected people to leverage ties to the agency to get scarce brands of liquor that everyday Oregonians have little chance of finding at the stores.

#### [INSIDE DOUGLAS COUNTY 4.21.25](#)

*KQEN RADIO*

Live from Salem, **State Senator David Brock Smith** talks about the crash that claimed the lives of an Umpqua Community College coach and a student-athlete on Friday night, the death of a fellow state senator over the weekend, Friday night's Town Hall in Roseburg and other legislative topics.

#### [Port of Portland rescinds DEI Policy, citing Trump executive order and federal funding at risk](#)

*Oregon Live | By Jonathan Bach*

Port of Portland commissioners on Monday voted to revoke a social equity policy installed in 2018.

The Port is the latest group to buckle under the Trump administration's threat of cutting federal funding if organizations don't disavow their own diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

#### [City Councilor: PBOT budget presentation 'most depressing'](#)

*KOIN | By Ariel Salk*

The City of Portland is facing a \$93 million budget deficit. To fill the gap, City Administrator Michael Jordan is proposing to slash roughly \$38 million from PBOT.

"Literally every Portlander will be hurt by this," said Millicent Williams the Director of PBOT of the cuts that would affect road work, lights and jobs.

Deputy Director of Finance and Administration Jeramy Patton said the reductions are "going to seem quite dire, and they are because we're cutting almost half of a lot of those programs or full programs in some cases, as we move forward."

It would also mean getting rid of street sweeping and leaf days entirely. Cutting those programs means an estimated 150 people will lose their jobs.

#### [Portland dropped bid for Bull Run filtration project exemption after Oregon senator pulled support](#)

*Oregon Live | By Shane Kavanaugh*

Portland officials said last week that the city [dropped its bid](#) for a state land-use exemption on its \$2 billion water filtration plant because it believed an assist from Oregon lawmakers wouldn't ensure an on-time finish for the controversial project.

What the city did not disclose, however, was that the bill's chief sponsor had already withdrawn his support after learning the [Bull Run water treatment facility](#) was in limbo.

Sen. Chris Gorsek, D-Gresham, was unaware that a key permit required for the project was under appeal when he signed on to Senate Bill 936, his staff told The Oregonian/OregonLive this week.

#### [Dexter Arrives in El Salvador, Demands Release of Wrongfully Deported Man](#)

*Willamette Week | By Tyler Brown*

U.S. Rep. Maxine Dexter (D-Ore.) has landed in El Salvador, joining three other Democratic lawmakers to demand the release of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a legal U.S. resident who was wrongfully deported and remains imprisoned despite a U.S. Supreme Court order requiring his return.

Abrego Garcia, 29, a legal resident who fled gang violence in El Salvador at 16, was living in Maryland with his U.S. citizen family when he was deported March 15. The Trump administration has acknowledged the deportation as an "administrative error," but has since refused to comply with the high court's ruling.

Dexter said her group requested to visit Abrego Garcia in prison but was denied access by the U.S. embassy.

#### [Oregon college presidents join nearly 200 universities decrying Trump administration interference in higher education](#)

*Oregon Live | By Jamie Goldberg*

The presidents of three Oregon colleges are among the leaders of nearly 200 U.S. colleges and universities who are calling on the Trump administration to stop "unprecedented [government overreach](#) and political interference now endangering American higher education."

### **ECONOMY**

#### [Oregon business owners decry 'whipsawing' tariffs](#)

*KOIN | By Ariel Jacobazzi*

Erica Mitchell, the CEO of [Hood River Distillers](#), is very concerned about the on-again/off-again tariffs President Trump imposed on most countries. The worst part is not knowing what's coming or what's going to happen.

Wyden hosted the roundtable at the [Port of Portland](#) where he heard a number of business leaders say they're already feeling the consequences of these tariffs.

"They have clients and customers who are making adjustments, making decisions that will cost them more and not six months from now," Wyden said, "but they're starting to see the costs come in and hit them in the wallet very hard."

### **HOUSING**

#### [New developments will bring hundreds of housing units to Salem](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Whitney Whitworth*

Two planned developments will bring hundreds of housing units to south Salem in the coming years. More than 70 units of affordable housing will be added to the Grand Fir Apartments development located at 4455 27th St. SE.

### **CRIME & PUBLIC SAFETY**

#### [St. Helens sex scandal: Embattled St. Helens principal resigns amid district sex abuse scandal](#)

*KOIN | By Matt Rawlings*

The embattled principal of St. Helens High School, Katy Wagner, who is facing [multiple felony charges](#), resigned from her position on Friday, the St. Helens School District confirmed to KOIN 6 News.

Wagner was put on administrative leave on Nov. 15 of last year after news broke that a current teacher, Eric Stearns, and a former teacher, Mark Collins, [were arrested for alleged sexual abuse](#). On Nov. 21,

officials announced that Wagner was under investigation for allegedly failing to report safety concerns amidst sex abuse allegations against teachers at the school, authorities said.

On Nov. 27, Wagner was arrested after being charged with official misconduct and criminal mistreatment.

#### **[Portland goes a month without homicide](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Zaeem Shaikh*

Portland has not recorded a [homicide](#) in a month, a gap not seen since 2023 and a noticeable respite after the city saw seven killings this March.

Shootings are also down by close to 30% compared with the same period last year, according to police data. The Police Bureau has recorded 190 shooting incidents – 31 of which resulted in non-fatal injuries, compared with 266 last year.

#### **ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

#### **[Oregon is getting hotter. This state program is helping thousands of renters stay cool](#)**

*OPB | By Monica Samayoa*

The [Oregon Department of Energy's Rental Heat Pump Program](#) was created by lawmakers in 2022. They allocated \$15 million to the agency for heat pump installations. The goal was to help renters — who normally have little to no say on what devices and appliances can be installed in their units — get access to cooling and heat devices through working with their landlords.

The rebate program was created after an unprecedented 2021 heat dome hovered over Oregon for nearly a week in late June, with some areas reaching temperatures as high as 118 degrees Fahrenheit. Nearly 100 Oregonians died from heat-related illnesses. Those who died were primarily older and living alone with no AC or cooling devices.

Renters are vulnerable to extreme weather events like heat waves because they cannot upgrade their homes without their landlord's consent. Doing those kinds of upgrades, like installing a heat pump or replacing electrical boxes to handle the power needs of a heat pump, requires a lot of money. On average, installing a heat pump can cost about \$6,500, depending on the size of the unit.

That's where the Rental Heat Pump Program comes in. The Department of Energy works with approved contractors, who in turn work with landlords to install energy-efficient heat pumps and make electrical upgrades to rental properties. Properties eligible for these upgrades include rented rooms, houses, apartment buildings, manufactured homes and recreational vehicles.

As they work directly with property owners, Headley said, contractors have an opportunity to build relationships with local organizations, property owners and the tenants receiving the units.

So far, 3,019 projects have been completed with more than \$12 million in rebates paid out. Those rebates help support project costs totaling more than \$23 million.

Like other popular state energy efficiency programs, funding for this program is not enough to meet demand. Funds were exhausted in the first eight months the rental rebate program was open.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES & WILDFIRE**

#### **[Tribes battle PGE's plan to seize Willamette Falls land](#)**

*KOIN | By Joelle Jones*

A federal trial is now underway in the legal battle for a fishing area at the base of Willamette Falls, pitting the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde against Portland General Electric's plan to seize 5 acres of land at the banks, citing cultural and historical significance.

"Oregon waters should not be controlled by a private company — they belong to all Oregonians," George said. "All Oregonians have a right to the falls, to go there and to recreate, and many people do. But if this place is taken into private property ownership, PGE will determine whether or not Oregonians can go there and under what terms."

#### **[Regional News](#)**

#### **[Washington restricts armed services from entering state without governor's OK](#)**

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

Washington Governor Bob Ferguson (D) signed a bill on Monday restricting out-of-state military forces from entering the state without the governor's approval.

[House Bill 1321](#) requires National Guard troops to have permission from the governor, or must be called into service by the president, before they can enter the state, officials explained, noting similar laws exist in other states including Idaho, Texas and Montana.

#### **National News**

##### **Exclusive: The White House is looking to replace Pete Hegseth as defense secretary**

OPB | BY Tom Bowman

The White House has begun the process of looking for a new leader at the Pentagon to replace Pete Hegseth, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to speak publicly. This comes as Hegseth is again mired in controversy over sharing military operational details in a group chat.

The defense secretary is under fire after revelations that he shared classified information in a group chat with his wife, brother and lawyer, according to the official.

##### **Supreme Court weighs who should decide public school curriculum: Judges or school boards?**

OPB | By Nina Totenburg

The U.S. [Supreme Court](#) jumps back into the culture wars Tuesday, as the justices tackle a clash between two bedrock values in American public schools: On one side is the longstanding tradition of [local school boards determining class curriculum](#) for everyone. On the other side is the notion that public schools should accommodate religious objections to some materials by allowing [parents to opt their kids out of some classes](#).

##### **Trump faces bipartisan criticism over Abrego Garcia deportation**

OPB | By Luke Garrett

The Trump administration received bipartisan criticism on Sunday for its deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia — a Salvadorian citizen who lived in Maryland and was deported to a prison in El Salvador due to an “administrative error.”

##### **Student loans in default to be referred to debt collection, Education Department says**

OPB | By Annie Ma

The Education Department will begin collection next month on [student loans](#) that are in default, including the garnishing of wages for potentially millions of borrowers, officials said Monday.

##### **Federal judge tells Trump administration to re-instate two Oregon student visas**

KATU | By Christina Giardinelli

Two graduate students attending Oregon State University and the University of Oregon will be allowed to continue classes, research and student teacher assignments without risking deportation, for now.

On Monday, a federal judge in Eugene granted a temporary restraining order in two separate lawsuits filed on behalf of the students against the Trump administration, ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).