

Oregon News

POLITICS

[A 2023 Bill Allowed Classified School Employees to Collect Unemployment Benefits on School Breaks](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

When the final school bell sounds this spring, students will head to summer camps and swimming pools—and thousands of school employees will begin collecting unemployment checks.

Senate Bill 489 was a breakthrough for the Oregon School Employees Association, which represents non-licensed education staff. That union has argued that classified employees—crucial to sustaining school functions—deserved access to the same benefits as other seasonal workers. Such employees include paraeducators, bus drivers and administrative assistants.

But now, after its first year of implementation (the bill went into effect in January 2024), SB 489 is sending school districts scrambling during an already fraught budget season. That's because school districts, like other public employers, shoulder the full cost of unemployment benefits when they're used, reimbursing the state dollar for dollar.

[Bill would allow Oregon governor to appoint a replacement for U.S. senators](#)

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

The next time one of Oregon's U.S. senators dies or retires before the end of their term, the governor could get to [appoint their temporary replacement](#).

That proposal, [in Senate Bill 952](#), would bring Oregon in line with the vast majority of states, which allow their governor to appoint a temporary stand-in for a U.S. senator.

And [an amendment](#) by state **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham of The Dalles** would clarify that the governor can't appoint themselves to the position.

The bill drew some letters in opposition from voters who argued that it undermines the democratic process. Bonham, Republican leader in the Senate, also raised the point Wednesday that temporary appointees who choose to run in the special election could benefit from incumbent status.

"We've seen it in the Legislature, right? The person that resigns before the end of session. Someone comes in as an appointee," Bonham said. "I don't think I've ever seen that appointed person lose."

[PacifiCorp appeals class action ruling over 2020 Oregon wildfires](#)

OPB | By April Ehrlich

PacifiCorp has filed a long-awaited appeal to a class action ruling that has so far awarded millions of dollars to people harmed by wildfires in 2020.

[Bill to bring back truancy fines under discussion in Salem](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

[House Bill 2052](#) proposes penalties for parents or guardians of students who accumulate eight or more unexcused absences within a four-week period during the school year.

The proposed citation would be classified as a Class-C violation, carrying a maximum fine of \$500. A proposed amendment to the bill would change the citation to a Class-E violation, which could decrease the financial penalty.

"The goal isn't to fine. The goal is to get the kids in school so that they can have the most successful life that they can have," said Representative [Emily McIntire](#) (R-56), the chief sponsor of the bill.

Truancy fines were previously eliminated by [Senate Bill 817 in 2021](#). An attempt to reinstate them was made in [2023 with Senate Bill 48](#), which initially proposed fines up to \$2,000 for compulsory school attendance violations. However, the bill was amended to create a Task Force on School Attendance to study chronic absenteeism and truancy, removing the proposed fines. The amended bill did not pass.

[Gov. Tina Kotek appears to have a clear path through next election](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Randy Stapilus

Kotek won in considerable part with the help of core organizational elements of the Oregon Democratic Party, including labor, environmental and other groups. There's been no indication she's lost any

significant support from those groups since, and no reason to think her fundraising won't be at least adequate.

Nor is there any clear evidence — though we're still early in the cycle — of a credible challenger. Republicans in 2022 made a serious effort to nominate a relatively broadly acceptable candidate, Christine Drazan (a former legislator now back in the legislature). They fell short, albeit not by a lot. Who is the Republican who could win a Republican primary and run much more powerfully than Drazan did? No names come to mind.

[Oregon bill would mandate health care employers prevent, report workplace violence](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alan Cohen

Hennessy's experience is part of a growing trend of violence toward health care workers — injuries from workplace violence in hospitals nearly doubled in the last decade and 92% of nurses reported experiencing violence last year in an Oregon Nurses Association survey.

After trying and failing to pass a law that criminalized workplace violence last year, lawmakers introduced [Senate Bill 537](#) to fund prevention work in hospitals across the state, include union representatives in safety committees, increase training minimums and mandate health care providers track and report violent incidents to the state. A committee vote on the bill is scheduled for Thursday.

[Watch: Willamette Week: Roadblocks to affordable housing](#)

KATU

A story by the Oregon Journalism Project featured in this week's issue of Willamette Week dives into local wage laws and asks where politicians' motivations lie.

Oregon Journalism Project's Nigel Jaquiss joined KATU's Wright Gazaway on Wednesday to break it down.

[State economist breaks down potential impact of Trump tariffs on Oregon](#)

KATU

The universal 10% rate will go into effect on April 5. The customized rates will take effect on April 9. The president is adamant this will reinvigorate American manufacturing by incentivizing companies to increase production in the United States.

Economists are predicting prices will go up for the average consumer. The administration has acknowledged there will be an adjustment period.

[Oregon gas pumps ranked 5th most expensive in the US as West Coast prices rise](#)

KOIN | By Aimee Plante

Oregon's average gas prices are the fifth most expensive in the nation, according to experts at [AAA](#).

[Oregon Department of Education ends math, reading programs amid fed cuts](#)

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

The Oregon Department of Education is slashing several math and literacy programs after the Trump administration terminated pandemic-era funds for schools, the Oregon Department of Education announced Tuesday.

According to ODE, around \$3.5 million in COVID-era funding appropriated by Congress for the state agency was terminated effective March 28, ten months earlier than state officials expected, ODE said.

[Weber focuses on education and transportation in long session](#)

Tillamook Headlight Herald

Oregon State Senator Suzanne Weber has been spending much of her time during the long session concentrating on issues facing Oregon's schools and transportation network.

Weber said that she and other members of the Joint Committee on Transportation are still working to get a handle on funding shortfalls at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and that she is a fan of certain aspects of Governor Tina Kotek's education accountability plan but wants more details.

Weber said that she liked that the state was taking a comprehensive look at the system but said that she had questions about testing requirements and how administrators would be involved in accountability

efforts and would like to see more details about those issues. “I’m not seeing the details in the broad picture regarding it and that’s what I’d like to see,” Weber said.

[Wolf predation bill makes it through Oregon Senate](#)

Wallowa County Chieftan | By Bill Bradshaw

State Sen. Todd Nash has accomplished one of his chief goals as a new state senator — getting the Legislature’s upper house to pass an update to Oregon’s wolf depredation compensation program. The Senate in a 28-1 vote Tuesday, March 25, passed Senate Bill 777. Nash was the chief sponsor for the bill that now moves to the House, where Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, is championing the legislation, which has yet to be assigned to a committee. The bill provides what Nash said is “fair compensation for ranchers who lose livestock or working dogs to confirmed wolf kills while increasing funding for nonlethal deterrence,” according to a press release.

[Opinion: Gov. Kotek’s list of three goals is missing a critical fourth](#)

Oregon Live

Oregonians have become familiar with the three goals Gov. Tina Kotek has pursued since her election nearly two and a half years ago: housing, education and behavioral health. These are worthy goals that focus on issues Oregon needs to address.

Unfortunately, the list is one goal short. It’s missing economic development.

Private sector activity, after all, generates jobs, economic activity, philanthropy and the revenue that supports public services - including those the governor has prioritized. Yet Oregon’s business environment has suffered years of neglect, and the consequences have begun to show.