

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **[A Second Democratic Lawmaker Falls Seriously Ill](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss*

Although the extent of the health challenges faced by Woods are unclear, Wagner's decision to remove him from committees suggests they may be serious.

Earlier this session, as the Oregon Capitol Chronicle [reported](#), state Rep. Hoa Nguyen (D-Portland) revealed she was suffering from stage 4 cancer, which has caused her to be absent much of the session as she undergoes treatment.

The health of Nguyen and Woods are matters of great consequence for them and concern for their constituents. In this session, they also have import for their caucus and its policy aims, which dangle by a thread.

Although there is no certainty that transportation tax increases will make it to the floor of either chamber for a vote, Democrats would either need to convince some Republicans to vote for tax increases or get every single Democrat to vote yea. Neither scenario is impossible, but health-related absences add another element of uncertainty to the process.

#### **[Oregon's High, Static Estate Tax Is Chasing Away Wealthy Retirees, Common Sense Institute Says](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger*

That's the conclusion of a [new report](#) by the Common Sense Institute of Oregon, a nonpartisan think tank "dedicated to the protection and promotion of Oregon's economy."

Older people who have amassed assets are leaving Oregon because the state is one of just 12 that has an estate tax, which, according to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, is a tax "on your right to transfer property at your death."

Oregon's estate tax shoos wealthy people away because it has the lowest exemption threshold and the third-highest rate, the report says. That's bad news for the local economy, because wealthy retirees spend money on things like theater tickets and restaurants. They also buy more mundane things like groceries.

If you die in the Beaver State and leave behind more than \$1 million, the Department of Revenue will collect 10%. Leave more than \$1.5 million, and ODR will take 10.25%. It goes up from there, topping out at 16% for anything over \$7.5 million.

If the \$1 million minimum remains in place, the estate tax will push 125,000 people out of Oregon by 2035.

#### **[Oregon sex offender risk assessments delayed due to funding issues](#)**

*KATU*

Amidst the backlog of unclassified sex offenders in Oregon, state law requires the Oregon Board of Parole do risk assessments on every registered sex offender in the state.

However, the agency says it's never been funded or staffed to finish the job. Republican lawmakers and rape survivors say the state, specifically lawmakers, just haven't prioritized getting this part done.

The executive director of the Oregon Board of Parole answers questions about the backlog in an exclusive interview with KATU News.

#### **[Court halts Oregon governor's executive order requiring project labor agreements](#)**

*Northwest Labor Press*

A state circuit court judge is blocking an order by Oregon Governor Tina Kotek that directs state agencies to use project labor agreements (PLAs) when they undertake public construction projects. Kotek issued the order in December. It commits to use union construction labor for the most part when any state agency awards a construction contract or commits funds to a construction project.

But on Feb. 21, the construction trade group Associated General Contractors led a group of plaintiffs in a lawsuit saying Kotek's order exceeded her legal authority.

### [Oregon Democrats unveil \\$1.9 billion transportation funding plan](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle* | By Julia Shumway

Oregonians would pay more at the pump, higher fees when they buy a car or bike and see more money deducted from their paychecks to pay for transit under a wide-ranging plan released Thursday by Democratic lawmakers for filling a transportation deficit.

The plan, which will be refined by the Legislature before it adjourns in June, includes raising Oregon's current 40-cent gas tax to 60 cents per gallon by Jan. 1, 2032. The biggest jump, to 48 cents, would happen Jan. 1, 2026, with 4-cent increases every two years until 2032.

Democrats hold 36 seats in the House and 18 in the Senate, enough to pass tax increases without Republican support. Still, McLain and Gorsek said the plan incorporates Republican priorities, including tweaks to weight-mile charges for trucks that Republican vice-chair Shelly Boshart Davis, an Albany **Senate Republican**, meanwhile, said the proposal is a start but requires significant revisions. **Sen. Bruce Starr, R-Dundee** and a committee vice chair, said Republicans are committed to finding common ground. "The majority has made it clear that we will have a seat at the table, and we anticipate the final product will look a lot different than what was released today," Starr said.

### [Oregonians likely to see higher transportation taxes next year, lawmakers announce](#)

*Oregon Live* | By Carlos Fuentes

Top Oregon lawmakers have indicated for months that a major transportation package [they're pushing this year](#) will almost certainly include increased or new taxes.

Late Thursday, key **Senate Republicans** indicated a desire to work with Democrats to finalize the package. **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham of The Dalles** said he was pleased to see the framework, but said in a press release that the proposed tax increases are "far from the solution Oregonians need."

**Sen. Bruce Starr**, a Republican from Dundee and co-vice-chair of the transportation committee, sounded a more optimistic note.

"This is just the beginning, and there's much work to do," Starr said in the release. "Republicans are committed to being part of the conversation and finding common ground to solve the state's transportation problems."

### [Oregon lawmakers unveil \\$1.9B transportation package amid 'crumbling infrastructure'](#)

*KOIN* | By Michaela Bourgeois

Oregon lawmakers unveiled plans for a \$1.9 billion transportation package on Thursday, amid concerns over deteriorating roads and bridges across the state.

The [Oregon Transportation Reinvestment Package](#) was announced by Joint Committee on Transportation Co-Chairs Rep. Susan McLain (D-Hillsboro) and Sen. Chris Gorsek (D-Gresham), who said "urgent action is needed this session" to build a stable transportation system for the 21st century.

### [Oregon Democrats propose \\$1.9 billion increase to the State Highway Fund](#)

*KATU* | By Vasili Varlamos

Oregon Democrats have unveiled a transportation funding proposal that would generate an additional \$1.9 billion per biennium for the State Highway Fund. The plan seeks to address critical infrastructure needs by increasing taxes on gas, vehicle registration, and more.

### [Oregon lawmakers consider easing involuntary mental health care standards.](#)

*KGW* | By Evan Watson

Oregon lawmakers are considering changes to the [state's civil commitment laws](#) — making forced mental health treatment a more accessible option for people in crisis.

Advocates argue that changes are needed to get people help before [they're dangerous to themselves or others](#), while opponents fear loosening state standards could be a slippery slope towards institutionalism and overwhelm an Oregon [mental health system that's already in crisis](#).

Governor Tina Kotek, in her [state of the state address in January](#), named civil commitment reform as one of her priorities.

As things stand, the limited capacity in Oregon's secure psychiatric care system is a significant barrier to expanding civil commitment. The Oregon State Hospital labors under a series of separate and at times competing court orders, requiring that criminal aid and assist patients [be admitted in a timely manner](#), that those patients be discharged more quickly regardless of competency, and that counties receive a 60-day notice before a patient is discharged.

Lawmakers are considering other bills that address those areas, and Governor Kotek's proposed budget calls for \$90 million for 363 treatment beds and \$50 million for workforce investments.

### [First Lady Testifies in Favor of Bill That Would Make Civil Commitments Easier](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Nigel Jaquiss

Kotek Wilson testified in favor of [House Bill 2467](#), which would make it easier for officials to civilly commit people experiencing mental health crises who pose a danger to themselves or others.

As governor, Tina Kotek has made reforming and expanding Oregon's woeful behavioral health system a top priority. Kotek Wilson's desire to be involved in the policy and personnel decisions around those changes led to conflict with Kotek's staff and played a role in the departure of several high-level staffers last year.

### [Capital Chatter: Oregon broke the Legislature this week](#)

*Oregon Capital Insider* | By Dick Hughes

Still, **Sen. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford**, reportedly was as shocked as anyone that the Senate Rules Committee allowed a public airing of his SB 210. The measure would ask voters to decide whether to continue with mail elections or revert to traditional polling places. "This is a highly interesting topic for the citizens of Oregon," Brock Smith told committee, referring to his legislation as "the bill that broke OLIS today." His argument: Oregon's vote-by-mail and voter-registration procedures have evolved. A referral to voters would be a simple and democratic way for Oregonians to affirm whether they still prefer and trust mail balloting.

It certainly was an exercise in public involvement. SB 210 elicited the most written testimony ever – 14,226 comments by the Wednesday afternoon cutoff.

**Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham, of The Dalles**, suggested the numbers reflected which side was better at rallying activists, not necessarily how Oregonians felt. That might be accurate. Interest groups certainly were effective. It's fascinating that SB 210 drew more testimony than housing/homelessness, schools, guns or any other issue so far. Oregonians have uploaded 72,087 pieces of testimony during the 2025 legislative session. About 20% are on SB 210.

### [Oregon insiders: Who's who in and around state government](#)

*Oregon Capital Insider* | By Dick Hughes

Sen. Aaron Woods, D-Wilsonville, periodically has been absent from the Oregon Capitol for medical treatment. In light of legislative deadlines and committee-quorum requirements, Senate President Rob Wagner on Thursday appointed replacements for Woods on three committees: Labor and Business, Deb Patterson, D-Salem; Ways & Means, James Manning Jr., D-Eugene; and Ways & Means Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee, Mark Meek, D-Gladstone, co-chair, and Wagner. The League of Minority Voters held its annual gala last week in Portland. Honorees included Gov. Tina Kotek; **Sen. Cedric Hayden**, R-Fall Creek; and Rep. Travis Nelson, D-Portland.

### [Portland Moguls Fund Poll to Test Repeal of Preschool for All](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Sophie Peel

A group of Portland business owners have funded a poll to test voter appetite for repealing Multnomah County's Preschool for All tax, among other potential ballot measures.

The six ballot initiatives the poll tests: requiring a minimum number of police officers for the city; requiring Multnomah County to fund 700 jail beds, which Goodman says are currently sitting vacant;

requiring third-party audits of Multnomah County programs; an in-person work mandate for city and county employees; restricting where “tents, tarps and sleeping bags can be distributed and used”; and repealing Multnomah County’s Preschool for All tax.

The Preschool for All Tax is a marginal tax on high-income earners to fund preschool placements for all 3- and 4-year-olds in the county. The tax has brought in higher-than-expected revenues since its inception, and though the county has regularly insisted it is meeting, and even exceeding, its program targets, *WW’s* past reporting shows the [implementation has been shaky](#).

The county says it funded over 2,200 preschool seats across 130 different facilities in school year 2023-24, through the program. The program aims to fund 11,000 seats total by 2030.

The tax is set to [increase by 0.8%](#) in 2027. County commissioners voted last year to delay the tax increase by one year, as it was originally set to increase at the start of 2026.

#### **[OR homeless crisis: Kotek launches pilot to house Oregonians with mental illness](#)**

*KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois*

Amid Oregon’s homelessness crisis, Governor Tina Kotek revealed a new pilot project on Thursday, aiming to bring housing stability for unsheltered Oregonians facing mental illness.

Under the [Housing 360 pilot](#), the Oregon Housing and Community Services state agency is awarding \$3.4 million in grants to community partners.

The pilot program comes after Kotek signed [Senate Bill 5701](#) in 2024, which gave \$39 million to OHCS for the Oregon Rehousing Initiative to move people from homelessness to permanent and stable housing, the governor’s office noted, adding, Housing 360 is funded through the Oregon Rehousing Initiative.

Since Gov. Kotek declared a [homelessness state of emergency](#) in March 2023, the state estimates that 3,300 unsheltered households will be rehoused by July.

#### **[Labor Leader Says Kotek Surprised Union With Call to Close OHSU Primate Center](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger*

The executive director of one of Oregon’s largest unions says Gov. Tina Kotek caught him and other labor leaders by surprise when she called for the eventual closure of the Oregon National Primate Research Center.

The Beaverton facility, run by Oregon Health & Science University, employs 408 people. About 170 of them are members of the Oregon chapter of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

Taking a stand on the primate center puts Kotek in a tough political position. AFSCME endorsed her for governor in 2022 and contributed to her campaign. Her call came just as the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine began running ads on television and radio describing alleged abuses at the center. OHSU won a reprieve on the funding front last week when a federal judge in Massachusetts [permanently barred](#) the Trump administration from slashing the amount of “indirect funding” that the NIH provides along with each grant. Indirect funding pays for overhead like heat and electricity in labs. The administration is expected to appeal.

#### **[Oregonian PERS database 2025: Find how much government retirees receive in pension pay](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Ted Sickinger*

If all this sounds surprising, then perhaps you’ve never heard of PERS’ [now infamous money match formula](#), a lucrative, market-based retirement calculation method that has been minting millionaires for decades. It’s a principal cause of PERS’ \$30 billion deficit today, and why taxpayers are backstopping a system that, come July, [will demand 27 cents in contributions](#) from public employers for every dollar they spend on payroll.

#### **[After fraught contract negotiations, teachers union in Beaverton hopes to gain sway on school board](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman*

The Beaverton Education Association is flexing its political muscles as upcoming school board elections approach, and the impact could radically reshape policy, personnel and budget decisions over the next four years in Oregon's third largest school district.

Beaverton is coming off of a year of [contentious labor negotiations](#): Its educators narrowly avoided a strike in January with an eleventh-hour contract settlement only after a state mediator was called in to referee.

Should all three non-incumbent candidates endorsed by the union wind up winning, it would shift the tenor of the school board toward the viewpoints of current board member Tammy Carpenter, a doctor who was elected in 2023 and has since found herself a lone dissenting voice on a number of issues. Carpenter, who has pressed the district to implement class size caps and to reconsider its school resource officer program, said she makes it a point to check in with union members before school board meetings to see if they've flagged anything on the agenda as a concern.

#### [\*\*Oregon's ombudsmen are supposed to be independent. But are they?\*\*](#)

*OPB | By Lauren Dake*

This legislative session, Oregon lawmakers have promised to exert more oversight over state agencies and ensure state taxpayer dollars are being spent responsibly. It's often an episodic effort in the state Legislature, but this year's effort comes at a time when state agencies serving some of the most at-risk residents have had myriad high-profile struggles; from the [Oregon Youth Authority](#), to the Department of Corrections, to the Department of Human Services. The state's child welfare system has been particularly beleaguered, [having recently settled a multi-million dollar civil suit](#) with promises of lowering rates of maltreatment.

Some lawmakers believe moving Amorelli's position out from underneath the Department of Human Services to a more independent office could be one move to strengthen accountability. The concept is embodied in [Senate Bill 1159](#).

Amorelli's investigations and recommendations are sent to the head of the Oregon Department of Human Services. The recommendations she makes are sent to the agency's head and not made public. Whether the agency follows through with her suggestions is also not made public.

#### [\*\*Between tariffs and survival, American business owners are doing alarming math\*\*](#)

*OPB | BY Alina Selyukh*

Giants like Walmart, for example, are now pressuring their foreign suppliers for discounts to offset some of the tariffs. Smaller retailers don't have that kind of muscle. In surveys, retailers across the board warn they'll have to raise prices.

And then there's the scale-back. Like Wells, many business owners are thinking of pulling back: perhaps shrink the store's selection so there's less to ship, freeze hiring, pause advertising or developing new products — stop growing and go into survival mode.

As another shopkeeper put it: Small-business owners like to make their own decisions and feel like they can live and die by them; the sweeping blanket tariffs are taking that ability out of their control.

#### [\*\*12,000 unemployment insurance tax forms were sent out with errors\*\*](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason*

About 12,000 Oregonians who were sent incorrect tax forms from the Oregon Unemployment Department should receive corrected tax forms next week.

The errors, which were discovered the week of March 27, affected about 5% of some 250,000 1099-G tax forms for unemployment insurance benefits.

#### [\*\*Editorial: Washington County must come clean on sewer agency's lavish spending\*\*](#)

*Oregon Live*

Nearly three weeks after a [news investigation](#) uncovered the extravagant ways leaders of Washington County's public sewer agency have been spending ratepayer funds, the elected commissioners who govern the agency appear poised to finally say, "Whoops."

Although it misses some key elements, the resolution targets some of the practices revealed by [The Oregonian/OregonLive's Jamie Goldberg](#) that allowed Clean Water Services officials to directly or indirectly spend ratepayer dollars on five-star hotel rooms in Hawaii, first-class airfare and tens of thousands of dollars a year on meals.

#### **[Multnomah County commissioners align to lessen the power of the board's chair](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Austin de Dios*

Last year, Multnomah County Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards floated a proposal to temper the power of the board's chair and bring reforms to how the county commission does business. With three newly elected commissioners [settled in](#), Brim Edwards has found allies to bring those ideas to life.

#### **TRUMP**

#### **[After a muted start, Oregon erupts in resistance to Trump's second term with a groundswell of protests](#)**

*OPB*

Thousands of Oregonians on Saturday joined nationwide protests against the second Trump administration, gathering in droves in cities from [Portland](#) to [Eugene](#), as well as east of the Cascades from [Madras](#) to conservative majority communities like Grants Pass and [Baker City](#).

#### **[USDA program cuts impact food banks, schools in Oregon](#)**

*Statesman Journal | By Bill Poehler*

About \$1.6 billion in cuts are known so far to [programs that supply food to food banks](#) and schools. [According to a United States Department of Agriculture report](#), the percent of people in the United States who don't have access to enough food rose to 13.5% in 2023 from 12.8% in 2022. In Oregon, that means about 554,550 people.

The Trump administration eliminated the USDA's [Local Food Purchase Assistance](#) program, which buys food from local farmers and distributes it to food banks, and the [Local Food for Schools](#) program, which also buys food from farmers for schools. The cuts were projected to save about \$1.16 billion nationwide.

#### **[Trump administration funding freeze of \\$27B clean-energy program strands local projects](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Allison Prang*

A multibillion-dollar Environmental Protection Agency program designed to spur investment in energy-efficiency improvements nationwide is tied up in a legal battle that threatens to upend planned projects across the United States focused on affordable housing, the adoption of electric vehicles and more.

#### **[Trump promised to deport millions of immigrant workers. Oregon bill would bar employers from capitalizing on that fear](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Aimee Green*

A bill before the Oregon Legislature would attempt to take a stand against President Donald Trump's national crackdown on immigrants by penalizing local employers who call or threaten to summon federal deportation authorities. The aim is to protect undocumented employees who complain about workplace conditions, unpaid wages and other on-the-job abuses.

Various versions of [Senate Bill 1119](#) would fine employers \$1,000 to \$10,000 for each instance of retaliation, or as supporters termed it, each effort to "scare the worker into submission."

#### **[Washington and Oregon sue over Trump elections order, saying mail voters could be disenfranchised](#)**

*AP News*

Washington and Oregon on Friday became the latest states to ask a court to reject President Donald Trump's efforts to overhaul elections in the U.S., a day after Democratic officials [in 19 others](#) filed a similar lawsuit.

#### **[White House Orders State Education Agencies to Scrap School DEI Programs](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

The Trump administration and the U.S. Department of Education ordered states Thursday night to scrap DEI programs for K-12 students or risk losing federal funding.

In a Friday email to school districts, the Oregon Department of Education said it had received the message and was working in partnership with the governor's office to evaluate the request. It wasn't immediately clear how many Oregon school districts have diversity, equity and inclusion programs, and how many workers those programs employ.