

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **Bill that would require Oregon county election clerks to livestream voting processes sparks concerns**

*Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes*

A proposed bill that would require every Oregon county election office to livestream its vote tabulation processes could improve trust in the [state's elections](#), its proponents say.

But officials who'd have to implement the bill, which was introduced by a Republican senator, say it would be costly and logistically difficult.

[Senate Bill 1054](#) would require each of Oregon's 36 county clerks to livestream footage of the rooms in which ballots are counted and from ballot drop sites during election seasons. It would also require those officials to store those recordings for two years.

**Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham of The Dalles**, chief sponsor of the bill, asserted Monday that requiring those recordings would improve elections transparency and voter trust.

"My bills are designed to combat some of the narrative that exists about election integrity," Bonham told his fellow members of the Senate Rules Committee during a public hearing on the bill. "And what I would love to do is just shore up these things that people are questioning."

Bonham said requiring similar, more expansive recordings from all county clerks would "give people a window into the room to see this process in an open and transparent way."

#### **Douglas County DA criticizes system over release of Level III sex offender**

*KPIC*

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office on Thursday warned the community of his release, saying he's a Level III sex offender - a classification for those deemed most likely to re-offend.

Strauss has a history of stalking and attempted rape.

The DA's office is blaming the legal system for his release.

#### **Bill would empower Oregon police to use drones to respond to 911 calls and chase suspects.**

##### **Opponents are worried**

*Oregon Live | By Aimee Green*

A bill that would allow police across Oregon to use drones to respond to 911 calls of crimes in progress, scope out crash scenes before officers can arrive, chase fleeing suspects and search for missing children or elderly adults advanced through a crucial first stage at the Legislature Monday.

[Senate Bill 238](#) passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee Monday on a 5-1 vote and is headed to the Senate floor. [Sen. Mike McLane](#), a central Oregon Republican, was the only committee member to vote against the bill.

[Sen. Kim Thatcher](#), a Keizer Republican, asked if police drones are clearly marked, so people who are being surveilled know who is maneuvering the device through the air.

On Monday, at the Capitol, **McLane** offered no explanation why he was the sole committee member to oppose the bill. The committee's only other Republican, Thatcher, voted for it. So did the four Democrats on the committee: Prozanski; [Sen. Anthony Broadman, D-Bend](#); [Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin, D-Corvallis](#); and [Sen. James Manning, D-Eugene](#).

#### **100s rally for Oregon 'Climate Superfund' bill to make Oregon polluters pay for extreme weather damages**

*Oregon Live | By Gosia Wozniacka*

[Senate Bill 1187](#) is modeled on similar laws recently passed in Vermont and New York and is based on the federal Superfund's well-established "[polluter pays](#)" principle that requires companies to clean up their hazardous waste sites across the U.S.

#### **Bill that would require school districts to ban cell phone use 'bell to bell' clears key hurdle in Legislature**

*Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman*

School districts across Oregon would prohibit students from [using their cell phones during the entire school day](#), including lunch and passing periods, under a bill that won support from the House Education Committee on Monday.

Under the bill, school districts would be required to spell out specific consequences for students who violate the rules.

The bill is not listed as having any fiscal impact, meaning that the state does not plan to pay for the lockable pouches that some school districts, including [North Clackamas](#), have used to help enforce such bell-to-bell bans. Such pouches typically cost about \$25 per student.

#### [KATU Investigation shocks lawmakers during hearing on bill tied to our reporting](#)

*KATU / By Wright Gazaway*

A [KATU investigation](#) left lawmakers shocked, as they debated a bill restricting when local governments can require developers to take on costly construction projects during the permitting process.

However, [KATU's investigation](#) found the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) planned to fix that exact same corner in an upcoming project, but emails we obtained show the city coordinated with ODOT to axe the work from the department's to-do list and let Price and her business partner do it instead.

Rogers is the general counsel for the Oregon Association of Realtors. That effort culminated in [House Bill 2658](#) – prohibiting governments from forcing people like Price to pay for work like this if it's part of a pending project.

"I am a self-employed real estate agent who wanted a humble office to work out of. In the end, I was forced to drain my personal finances," Price told lawmakers.

That testimony left a big impression with lawmakers, and more than one of them encouraged the city to refund Price for the cost of the work. Republican Rep. Alek Skarlatos asked Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) employee Kurt Krueger if the city would do that.

#### [Think Out Loud: Oregon bill would create farmworker labor standards board](#)

*OPB / By Rolando Hernandez*

Lawmakers are considering a bill that would give agricultural workers a seat at the table. [House Bill 2548](#) would establish a board made up of voices representing farmworkers, farmers, government agencies and labor law expert to help establish working standards and conditions. Reyna Lopez, executive director of PCUN, which is supporting the bill and Jenny Dresler, spokesperson for the Oregon Farm Bureau, which is opposed to the bill, join us to share their perspectives.

#### [Oregon Senate passes bill expanding foster children's rights](#)

*KATU / By Vasili Varlamos*

The Oregon Senate approved [a bill that significantly expands](#) the rights of foster children in the state.

The legislation, passed on Monday morning, builds upon the [Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights](#), which was [established](#) in 2013 to ensure essential rights such as safety, education, and visitation. The new bill introduces several additional rights for foster children. Notably, it allows them to decline participation in religious activities that conflict with their personal beliefs, marking the first time a statute explicitly recognizes a foster child's freedom of religion or non-religion.

Foster children would also gain the right to legal representation during law enforcement or abuse investigations, a provision not currently specified. Foster kids would also be entitled to appear at their own court hearing regardless of their age.

Several state Republicans voted against this bill over the right to decline participation in a religious activity. **Sen. Cedric Hayden** said that allowing a young child to decline to participate in such an event may lead to some unintended consequences.

#### [Preschool For All continues to exceed goals, but falls short of demand](#)

*OPB / By Rob Manning*

Multnomah County is meeting — and exceeding — its goals when it comes to providing free preschool to hundreds more children every year. But child care capacity remains a vast problem with thousands of families remaining on the outside looking in.

For the upcoming school year, the county's goal was to support 3,000 slots in a variety of settings - people's homes, large centers and at public schools. The program expects to far exceed that goal, and have capacity for 3,800 youngsters this year.

County voters opened the door to the universal preschool effort when they approved a ballot measure in 2020. It took two years to set up the program and collect sufficient revenue before it opened for the 2022-23 school year. The preschool effort is funded by a [1.5% marginal tax](#) on earnings of more than \$150,000 per year for an individual and over \$200,000 for households. An additional 1.5% is paid by individuals earning over \$250,000 and joint filers who earned more than \$400,000.

### **[Preschool for All Announces 3,800 Seats for 2025–26 School Year](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

Leaders of Multnomah County's Preschool for All announced Monday that the program would increase capacity to 3,800 seats for the 2025–26 school year.

The new figures, presented during a press conference at Every Step Preschool in Northeast Portland, mean the county's capacity increased by 1,575 seats from the 2024–25 school year. That's 800 seats higher than the county's 2022 revised goals for the program, which projected 3,000 seats for the program in the upcoming year. Ultimately, the county aims to create 11,000 seats by 2030 to meet the capacity it promised to voters in 2020.

A November 2023 *WW* investigation into Preschool for All found that the county was vastly underspending its program budget and creating relatively few new seats with the dollars it was collecting. The program is funded by a 1.5% marginal income tax on single filers who make above \$125,000; the tax increases to 3% on income over \$250,000. It has generated far more money than county officials forecast (["The Itsy Bitsy Project," WW, Nov. 8, 2023](#)).

But the county is undertaking new projects to expand capacity with its Preschool for All Facilities Fund. In partnership with BuildUp Oregon, a nonprofit trying to expand child care facilities in Portland, it has awarded more than \$16.4 million toward 44 projects to expand and improve preschool facilities throughout the county. It will request \$17 million in the 2026 fiscal year for more projects, BuildUp Oregon's Rachel Langford says.

Because the program is attracting more demand than it has capacity for, Barnes says the county is still using prioritization to help the kids who demonstrate the most need first. In the 2024–25 year, she says, 71% of kids served right now are from low-income families, 65% are children of color, and 30% speak a language other than English at home.

### **[PPS Will Shave Between \\$33 and \\$67 Million From Three Upcoming High School Modernizations](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

In its quest to lower price tags on what would be the nation's most expensive high schools, Portland Public Schools now estimates it will be able to shave between \$33 and \$67 million total off all three modernization projects.

### **[Oregon-based drug courier caught with 'massive' stash of meth sentenced to nearly 5 years](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

A man identified as an Oregon-based courier for a Mexican drug operation and caught with a "massive" amount of [methamphetamine](#) was sentenced Monday to nearly five years in federal prison.

### **[Portland Police Union Tries to Join the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, Stirring a Quarrel](#)**

*Willamette Week | By Sophie Peel*

In early March, the executive board of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council voted to admit the Portland Police Association into the organization, which already includes 104 affiliate unions. But the police union's admittance is now in question after labor critics took issue with it.

### [Thornburgh resort site in Central Oregon hits another water rights roadblock](#)

*OPB | By Emily Cureton Cook*

[In a March 31 opinion](#), Judge Raymond Crutchley shot down a petition brought by the developer against state regulators over access to groundwater in the Deschutes Basin.

Citing long-term groundwater declines in the area, state officials found Thornburgh's proposed water use for construction would likely not be "within the capacity of the resource."

### [Senators Starr and Weber Introduce SB 1201](#)

*Tillamook Headlight Herald*

Last week, Senator Bruce Starr (R-Dundee) and Senator Suzanne Weber (R-Tillamook) introduced Senate Bill 1201, a proposal to direct the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to conduct a feasibility study on the potential construction of a new Columbia River bridge west of the Interstate 5 bridges. This critical first step will assess whether this major infrastructure investment would alleviate congestion in the Portland metro area.

### [Editorial: Reduce fire risk to bring down insurance cost in Oregon](#)

*Bend Bulletin*

After the 2020 Labor Day fires destroyed entire communities in Oregon, from Phoenix to Detroit, the Oregon Legislature responded with Senate Bill 762, injecting cash into a slew of fire prevention programs. That money has done good things, like funding large projects in neighborhoods like Deschutes River Woods to remove flammable fuels, but it also gave us the state's wildfire hazard map, which sought to identify which properties are most at risk. Anyone who lived in a high hazard area received a letter from the state threatening to levy fines unless they took steps to reduce their risk.

### [Loss of federal funding could devastate rural schools and counties](#)

*Jefferson Public Radio*

Rural school districts and counties are preparing for the potential loss of funding from the [Secure Rural Schools](#) program.

### [EPA withholds \\$85 million meant to fund environmental justice projects in Oregon](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt*

A new community center and "climate resilience hub" in the southern Oregon town of Chiloquin should be months underway right now. Instead, city officials are wondering if they'll ever see the \$16 million they were promised in December from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to build it.

### [Trump's election order could jeopardize 'hundreds of thousands' of future mail ballots](#)

*OPB | By Ashley Lopez*

The state of Washington has been allowing election officials to count mail ballots that don't make it to their office until after Election Day for more than a hundred years now. It's a practice that could be prohibited in upcoming elections, thanks to a sweeping [executive order](#) signed by President Trump last month.

Holmes said this grace period is something that many voters in Washington have come to rely on. In the last presidential election, state officials [reported](#) they counted more than 250,000 ballots that didn't make it to their offices until after Election Day.

### [AG Rayfield invites Oregonians to share concerns at town hall on federal cuts](#)

*KATU*

Attorney General Dan Rayfield and State House Speaker Julie Fahey announced they will hold a joint town hall on Wednesday in Eugene to hear directly from Oregonians affected by recent federal government budget cuts and job layoffs. The event aims to provide a platform for people to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas for state-level action to address the fallout from these cuts.