

[The Oregon GOP's New Chairman Brings Some Baggage to His Role](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

November's election told the Oregon Republican Party it needed a fresh start. While voters nationally returned President Donald Trump to the White House, it was a different story in Oregon, where Republicans lost the 5th Congressional District seat; lost all statewide contests; and lost a seat in each legislative chamber, returning the Democrats to supermajorities in both.

"Jerry Cummings brings to the new role decades of leadership experience in politics, business, and community service," the party said in a statement. "His background as a Baptist minister, small business owner, and media professional equips him with the necessary skills to unite and energize the party."

Court records provide details from a long-running divorce and custody case, which stretched across three counties and lasted nearly a decade, that raise questions about Cummings' ability to set the tone his party desires. More recently, lawsuits filed by Cummings' creditors undercut his suitability for a role that requires managerial acumen and financial skills.

But in a handwritten application for a restraining order coinciding with the divorce filing, the woman said her husband's behavior spun out of control.

One of the candidates Cummings defeated for the chairmanship, Ben Edtl, says the state deserves better: "Oregon needs a strong Republican Party so we can get some balance around here. For the betterment of the party and for Oregonians across the state, I think Cummings should step down."

[Bill that would require Oregon county election clerks to livestream voting processes sparks concern](#)

Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes

[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."

Bonham acknowledged the clerks' concerns and said the bill's details would have to be sorted out later. "Valid concerns, totally get it," he said. "And yet I think the one thing that we all hold sacred is the integrity of our elections. We want to affirm to people that their vote matters, that the process is not in any way being manipulated, their votes not being marginalized or ignored. And so anything that we can do to enhance that transparency to the voter I think is important." The bill does not appear likely to advance.

[Oregon lawmakers punt on bill to prohibit new livestock farms in state's most polluted areas](#)

OPB | By Alejandro Figueroa

The biggest livestock farms could have been prohibited from building new or bigger facilities in some of Oregon's most polluted groundwater regions under a state legislative bill environmental groups were backing. But it won't happen this year.

The bill won't make it to the legislative floor, following a contentious hearing in Salem.

Senate Bill 80 would have prohibited Oregon from permitting new or bigger dairy farms and other big livestock operations from seeking a confined animal feeding operation, or CAFO, permit, in all three of those areas.

[The Gas Tax Already Hits Rural Oregonians Disproportionately. Lawmakers Want to Raise It 50%.](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

Last week, the Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation released its long-awaited funding proposal for the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The proposal, which would raise nearly \$1 billion a year, includes a slew of ideas, such as higher title and registration fees, a sales tax on vehicles, a road-use charge on delivery vehicles, and gradually moving all electric vehicles into a pay-per-mile program ("Supercharger," OJP, April 2). It also features a 20-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase, phased in over six years. That would increase the gas tax from 40 cents per gallon to 60 cents, a 50% increase. (California's current tax is 68 cents; Washington's is 53 cents.)

Indeed, ODOT's numbers show that rural Oregonians pay more in gas taxes than urbanites, with the biggest difference between those living east of the Cascades, who pay 71% more than people in the Portland metro area (see table, below).

Oregon built its gas tax system on a "user pays" principle, although as the Oregon Journalism Project has reported, the Legislature has failed its constitutional duty to equalize payments from passenger vehicle owners, who have underpaid in recent years, and heavy-truck owners, who have overpaid ("Shell Game," OJP, Feb. 26).

But the formula by which the Legislature distributes gas tax dollars penalizes rural Oregonians (see table, upper right). ODOT gets half the proceeds; 30% gets distributed to Oregon's 36 counties, based on the number of vehicles registered; and 20% goes to cities, based on population.

The state's most populous counties, which include its largest cities, get the lion's share of the money the state distributes, even though their residents drive relatively less. (There are offsetting examples in other areas; income taxes from the Willamette Valley, for instance, subsidize rural residents.)

[Repeal of Oregon's controversial wildfire hazard map moves closer](#)

KATU

A push to repeal Oregon's controversial wildfire hazard map is moving forward.

[Wildfire bills get mixed reviews as a key legislative deadline looms](#)

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

Lawmakers in both parties signaled Tuesday that they want the [state to increase funding to fight and prevent wildfires](#) – but they don't want to tax beverage containers to do it.

The lawmakers didn't give the bill an official yes or no when they sent it to the Revenue Committee. But several spoke against a proposed funding stream that has drawn some ire: Adding a non-refundable 5 cent charge on sales of most beverages in bottles and cans.

"We have to fund wildfire. Period. Somehow," he said. "Breaking a system we have right now, which is working really well, in order to pay for another environmental problem we have is really bad policy."

Wilsonville Democrat Courtney Neron, Salem Democrat Tom Andersen, Republican bill author Bobby Levy of Echo and Roseburg Republican Virgle Osborne also spoke against the idea.

Republicans argue it is "riddled with inaccuracies" given that no one surveyed individual properties. Homeowners fear that insurance companies have used the map to change their premiums or deny coverage. Under state law, insurance companies [are prohibited from using](#) the map for that purpose, and the state's Division of Financial Regulation [argues they never have](#). But rural property owners have insisted they felt punitive effects from what they say is a flawed map.

The Senate committee on Tuesday unanimously approved an amendment to Senate Bill 83 which repeals the map and related requirements.

[Oregon bill to eliminate controversial wildfire risk map advances](#)

Statesman Journal | By Zach Urness

An Oregon bill that would eliminate a controversial wildfire hazard map moved one step closer to reality on Tuesday after unanimously passing the Senate Committee on Natural Resources.

[Senate Bill 83](#) would repeal a map meant to identify parts of Oregon at high risk of catastrophic wildfires but has become a lightning rod for anger from rural residents who say it places an unfair burden on them.

“Rural Oregonians raised their voices and demanded action, and as a result, we’re finally seeing real progress. Senate Bill 83 puts power back in the hands of the people, not government bureaucrats,”

Senate and House Republicans said in a statement.

Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, also celebrated the bill's progress.

Oregon Republicans said the rules meant the burden of wildfire mitigation was falling on families with fixed incomes unable to make the required changes and struggling to fill out forms that would allow an exemption.

[Farmworker housing bill freed from legislative deadlines](#)

Capital Press | By Mateusz Perkowski

If single-family homes offered to farmworkers must comply with new state rules for farm labor camps, Scharf says she'd be even more averse to owning such dwellings.

Though farmers may not actually set fire to worker housing, several agricultural organizations fear they may stop offering it to employees rather than undertake expensive remodels required for labor camps. “At a time the governor says we need housing, this has the potential to shut down a significant chunk of housing,” said **Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**.

To avoid that outcome, Bonham has proposed excluding single-family homes offered to farmworkers, including those occupied by five or fewer employees, from the state's new regulations for agricultural labor camps. His proposal, Senate Bill 999, recently won a reprieve from legislative deadlines when the Senate Labor and Business Committee voted, 4-1, to move it to the House Rules Committee, where it will remain active until the end of the 2025 legislative session.

To address those concerns, Bonham amended the bill to clarify that such single-family homes would still fall under the habitability standards required by Oregon's landlord-tenant law.

[Opposition packs hearing on Gov. Kotek proposal to update critical groundwater area protections](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Gov. Tina Kotek's proposal to give state agencies more authority to intervene earlier in Oregon's contaminated groundwater areas met massive opposition at its first public hearing.

Bill advocates say it would provide much-needed updates to the state's Groundwater Quality Protection Act first passed in 1989. That act was meant to conserve groundwater resources and prevent contamination following well-testing across the state that showed many contained water with high levels of agricultural chemicals.

But those opposed to the updates include more than 560 people and groups who submitted [testimony](#) in advance of the hearing, as well as several eastern Oregon state representatives, who say the bill would allow state agencies broader authority to do water and soil testing and monitoring on private property without landowner consent and that it could lead to state agencies cutting off water to some.

[Senate passes bill aimed at curbing corporate influence in medicine](#)

Oregon Live | By Kristine de Leon

The Oregon Senate voted Tuesday to pass a bill that would bring some of the nation's strictest regulations over corporate ownership of doctor's offices and medical clinics.

[Senate Bill 951](#), which passed the chamber 21-8, aims to strengthen the state's long-standing prohibitions on the corporate control of medical practices and clinics — but opponents say it will weaken already struggling medical practices. The measure now heads to the House for approval.

Oregon law already requires licensed physicians hold a majority stake — at least 51% ownership — in medical practices. But proponents of the bill say more independent medical practices are partnering private equity firms and national health care conglomerates, sidestepping existing rules.

Sen. Cedric Hayden, R-Fall Creek, agreed that private equity firms and large corporations shouldn't call the shots on patient care but argued the bill would “vertically integrate more independent clinics under the umbrella of hospitals,” which he said would further reduce competition and limit patient choice.

[Oregon legislation to speed up housing development advances](#)

FOX12 News

A piece of new legislation intended to cut red tape and speed up the housing development process advanced through the Senate Committee on Housing and Development on Tuesday.

Senate Bill 974, pushed by Committee Chair Senator Khanh Pham (D—Outer SE & NE Portland) and **Vice Chair Senator Dick Anderson (R—Lincoln City)**, seeks to “streamline engineering, planning, and review processes that often delay housing projects across the state.”

Senator Anderson echoed that sense of urgency: “In a crisis, everyone must give something—and we all have to step up. Senate Bill 974 sends a clear signal to cities and counties that it’s time to get housing moving in every corner of the state, for every Oregonian.”

[Committee passes bill impacting planned improvement projects sparked by KATU investigation](#)

KATU | By Wright Gazaway

An Oregon legislative committee unanimously passed legislation sparked by a KATU investigation that found the City of Portland required a business owner to pay more than \$100,000 for costly construction despite an upcoming state project that included the same work.

[State regulators relaunch Zenith Energy’s air quality permit process](#)

Oregon Live | By Gosia Wozniacka

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has restarted Zenith Energy’s air quality permit process, announcing two public hearings and launching the public comment period despite a pending appeal and the new City Council’s pushback on the company’s fuels operation.

[Oregon Legislature may fund study of Willamette Valley garbage woes](#)

Statesman Journal | By Tracy Loew

The Willamette Valley is heading for a garbage crisis following the closure of the Reworld Marion [municipal waste incinerator](#) and [Coffin Butte Landfill](#)’s looming end of life, local lawmakers said Tuesday.

[House Bill 3794](#) would create a 12-member task force to make recommendations about solid waste disposal regionwide and submit a report to the Legislature by the end of 2026.

A bill aims to get ahead of the problem by creating a state task force to come up with regionwide solutions, the lawmakers said at a hearing on the bill.

The House Climate, Energy, and Environment Committee approved sending the bill to the House floor for a vote. It will first go to the Joint Ways and Means Committee, which will examine its potential cost.

[Oregon sues over Trump plan threatening libraries, museums](#)

Bend Bulletin

Oregon is one of 20 states suing the Trump administration, hoping to stop a plan that threatens services at libraries and museums across the state.

On March 31, President Donald Trump signed an executive order calling for the elimination of any “non-statutory components and functions” from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services and six other federal agencies. That order would place nearly all of IMLS’s staff on administrative leave, effectively shutting down its operations.

[Oregon public defenders push plan to address unrepresented crisis](#)

KGW | By Jamie Parfitt

As the Oregon Legislature considers how best to respond to a [crisis in public defense](#) they’d hoped to have solved two years ago, nonprofit public defenders in Marion County are bracing for the likelihood that judges will begin forcing cases on them despite their assertions that they already have full caseloads.

[OR housing crisis: Albany, Hood River develop housing for vets, BIPOC](#)

KGW | By Michaela Bourgeois

The Oregon Housing and Community Services agency is helping to bring new affordable housing units to Albany and Hood River, the state agency announced Tuesday.

OHCS is helping fund 168 affordable homes, which will offer services for veteran support, education and skills programs along with assistance with the application process for farmworkers.

[‘We’ve lost public trust’: Sewer board approves oversight after lavish spending revealed](#)

Oregon Live | By Jamie Goldberg

Washington County’s elected leaders voted unanimously Tuesday to adopt new oversight measures for the county’s embattled sewer agency and offered their first public comments since an Oregonian/OregonLive investigation uncovered [lavish business trips to Hawaii](#) and [sky-high food expenses](#).

[Oregon bill would mandate police swab felony suspects’ DNA upon arrest, not conviction, joining more than 30 other states](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A bill that would add Oregon to a list of more than 30 states that require law enforcement officials to collect the DNA of every serious felony suspect upon their arrest advanced out of a legislative committee Monday. The bill would represent a significant shift from current law, which allows the state to take DNA samples only upon a felony conviction.

Supporters of the bill say broader collection of DNA would enable police access to a larger pool of potential offenders and significantly increase chances of solving old cases — ranging from rape to robbery to murder — that may have gathered dust for years.

But opponents of [House Bill 3093](#) raised deep privacy and constitutional concerns, arguing that drawing the blood or swabbing the cheeks of people that police merely suspect of committing crimes would undermine the bedrock American principle of innocence until proven guilty.

[6 things that explain Oregon PERS and why it’s still minting pension millionaires today](#)

Oregon Live | By Ted Sickinger

How does someone who was a government employee for less than 14 years and never made more than \$32,000 a year end up with a pension of more than a quarter million dollars annually?

[As explained earlier this week](#) when the newsroom updated its [online database of retirees](#) in Oregon’s Public Employees Retirement System, it comes down to a legacy retirement formula that is still cranking some very lucrative benefits, despite legislative efforts to defuse the time bomb it created.

[Animal Rights Activists Call In DOGE to Defund OHSU’s Primate Center](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

Animal rights activists aiming to force the closure of the Oregon National Primate Research Center wrote to the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency this week urging it to cut funding for the facility because it conducts “wasteful, duplicative, and unethical experiments on nonhuman primates.”

The center got \$56 million of its \$63 million budget last fiscal year from the National Institutes for Health. DOGE is already in federal court fighting to slash millions from NIH grants nationwide.

[President Trump’s escalating tariffs could slow down Oregon’s economy](#)

OPB | By Kyra Buckley

Widespread tariffs could obstruct Oregon’s economy and deal a blow to the state’s manufacturing sector — similar to how import taxes affected the state during the first Trump administration.

“In 2018, we saw a real downshift in the economy, especially in the state economy,” Oregon’s chief economist Carl Riccadonna told OPB. “Oregon is more sensitive to manufacturing than most states. And by virtue of its geography, Oregon is more sensitive to exports than most states — as is true for any state with a long coastline, especially on the West Coast — with a lot of trade to Asia.”

[PRESCHOOL FOR ALL](#)

[County Auditor Finds Preschool for All Faces Multiple Risks to Expansion](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

In a widely anticipated audit of Multnomah County's Preschool for All program, released overnight Wednesday, County Auditor Jennifer McGuirk reported the program faces some challenges as it seeks to expand.

The program, which voters passed in 2020, aims to provide every preschooler in Multnomah County free care by 2030. The county estimates that meeting that goal will require 11,000 publicly funded seats—7,000 from converting private seats and 4,000 from expanding capacity.

But in the years since its passage, Preschool for All has been slow to ramp up participation as well as the number of seats and has struggled with underspending ([“The Itsy Bitsy Project,” WW, Nov. 8, 2023](#)). Those are problems McGuirk and her team highlighted in their audit, though they also found the program has done some good work bringing child care to priority, high-needs populations.

The audit, started in September 2023, comes as the program faces increased public scrutiny, including a recent survey by some [of the city's wealthiest businessmen](#) testing voters' appetite for repealing the tax. Preschool for All is funded by taxing 1.5% of income over \$200,000 for joint filers (\$125,000 for single filers) with another 1.5% on income over \$400,000 for joint filers (\$250,000 for single filers).

[Preschool for All Had \\$485 Million Left in Its Coffers After Fiscal Year 2024](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

Multnomah County's Preschool for All, which seeks to guarantee tuition-free child care to every preschooler in the county by 2030, reported another year of dramatically underspending its budget.

The county's annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, disclosed that Preschool for All once again collected more and spent less than it had planned.

While the county forecasted ending the latest fiscal year with \$260 million left unspent for Preschool for All, it instead ended with \$485.4 million, about \$225.4 million more than expected.

“With this staggering accumulation of funds—which continues to increase—for a consistently underspent program, is this truly a budget crisis or merely a lack of political will and transparency?” Weinstein says.

[Preschool for All needs to spend more of its savings, do more outreach and training, audit finds](#)

OPB | By Natalie Pate

Preschool for All is reaching its equity objectives but could do more to support preschools and serve diverse children, especially those with disabilities. The program also risks losing credibility if it fails to reach its goal of universal preschool across the county by 2030.

Among the findings, the audit concluded officials face a money problem — but not that they lack funding. They're not spending it quickly enough in the most critical areas.

Multnomah County has managed to increase the program's capacity by hundreds of children every year since it launched in 2022. And [earlier this week](#), officials announced they're expanding the number of slots they can offer.

For the upcoming school year, the county's goal was to support 3,000 slots in various settings, such as people's homes, large centers and public schools. Now, the program expects to exceed that goal and have capacity for 3,800 youngsters.

But the demand still heavily outweighs the supply, with hundreds of eligible families not getting slots for their children due to a lack of capacity.

According to the Multnomah County Auditor's Office, the issue isn't a lack of funding, as is [often argued in education](#). Instead, auditors say Preschool for All has saved up too much money and isn't spending enough to tackle the biggest challenges: sufficient facilities and an adequate, trained workforce.

[Preschool for All hits some milestones but risks not serving as many children as promised, auditor finds](#)

Oregon Live | By Austin de Dios

Multnomah County's heavily scrutinized effort to provide free preschool to all its 3- and 4-year-olds, starting with those at highest need, has met the mark in terms of who's filled seats, but the county has

shown signs it may not generate enough new slots, according to a report the county auditor released Wednesday.

To hit the 11,000-seat target, officials will need to convert roughly 80% of the county's existing preschool seats to take part in Preschool for All, the report said. But at this stage it has only brought on board about 11% of the estimated 840 licensed child care sites, the auditor wrote. That's a "risk for the program," it said.