

Oregon News

INCLEMENT WEATHER

[More than 100 cars on Oregon highway crash in 'whiteout conditions'](#)

Yahoo News | By David Knowles

A crash involving more than 100 vehicles in Portland, Ore., during “whiteout conditions” closed Interstate 84 on Thursday.

[At the last minute, Oregon legislative leaders close Capitol amid snowstorm](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway, Ben Botkin

Less than an hour before legislative hearings started, legislative leaders shuttered the Capitol for the day, hours later than other public agencies eying the brewing storm.

POLITICS

[Oregon bill would offer unemployment to striking workers](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

Lindsy Leahy, director of the Unemployment Insurance Division at the Oregon Employment Department, told lawmakers the department anticipates the fiscal impact of the bill would be about \$5.3 million in additional unemployment payments for the two-year budget for 2025-27, based on previous strike data. Leahy estimated \$3.5 million in additional payments for the same period for reimbursement employers — public employers who pay the state back for benefits their workers receive.

[INSIDE DOUGLAS COUNTY 2.11.25](#)

KQEN News Radio

Live from Salem, State Senator David Brock Smith has an update on current legislation, the status of a veterans home on the Roseburg VA campus and more.

[Ground News - NEWS UPDATE FROM STATE SENATOR SUZANNE WEBER: From the District – Rural Northwest Oregon Updates Volume 43](#)

Tillamook County Pioneer

By State Senator Suzanne Weber Public Hearings This Week SB 458 had a public hearing February 11th in Joint Committee on Transportation.

[Capital Chatter: Oregon is 166 years old, and we're still finding our way](#)

Oregon Capital Insider | By Dick Hughes

Almost four weeks into the 2025 Legislature, routine bills were making it through the House and Senate. Controversial bills were starting to light up committee hearings with discussions of farm fuels, Oregon’s estate tax, environmental regulations and other issues.

But routine bills are rolling along. Democrats, who control the Legislature, like to point out that most bills — about 90% — pass with bipartisan backing. Ah, it’s the other 10% of bills, the controversial ones, that gall minority Republicans.

Among other things, individuals permitted to practice law in Oregon would be referred to as “licensed” by the Bar instead of “members” of the Bar. Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, a lawyer and former judge, carried the bill on the Senate floor.

Senate President Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, said this week that he has encouraged committee chairs to give time to worthy ideas and to develop productive relationships with minority Republicans.

Republicans, however, contend a higher proportion of their bills never get a hearing, let alone become law. For example, Fahey told journalists last month, “I don’t think we’re going to have public hearings on any of the bills restricting access to abortion.”

[Economists: Oregon overtime laws reduce profitability, worker earnings](#)

Capital Press | By Kyle Odegard

An economic analysis confirms what farmers already believed — Oregon’s new agricultural overtime rules will negatively affect farm profitability and could decrease weekly earnings of workers.

“Farms will face strong pressure to minimize labor costs for their own financial survival, while also feeling pressure to provide enough work to retain their skilled and often long-term employees,” Delbridge wrote.

While increasing worker earnings was a key goal of agricultural overtime legislation, that seems unlikely, Delbridge wrote. Farm managers will try to minimize overtime costs, including by reducing hours.

[Threatening emails could lead to jail time under Oregon bill](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt

Senate Bill 473 would outlaw making a “threatening communication” to an elected official or their family – as long as those threats are connected to a person’s official duties and reasonably lead the recipient to “expect the threatening communication to be followed by unlawful acts of violence.”

SB 473 was requested by Eugene city officials, who say they’ve grappled with increasing threats in recent years. It is sponsored by state Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee that took it up on Tuesday.

State Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said he worried the bill as written could criminalize heated political disagreements.

“We have to make sure we’re talking about threats,” he said.

[Data on Oregon’s experiment to keep drug users out of jail remains limited, leaving impacts unclear](#)

Oregon Live | By Austin De Dios

It’s been five months since [changes to Oregon law](#) made possessing small amounts of hard drugs a crime again, prompting counties to [launch programs](#) to deflect drug users away from jail and into addiction treatment or other services.

Between Sept. 1 and Jan. 22, only 26 people successfully did so statewide, early data from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission show. During that same time period, 77 people failed deflection, meaning they did not follow through with county referrals to programs for addiction treatment, behavioral health, shelter or other social services.

[Bonneville Power staff departures under Trump raise concerns about Northwest electrical grid](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Tony Schick, Courtney Sherwood

The Bonneville Power Administration could lose nearly 20% of its workforce because of President Donald Trump’s efforts to shrink the federal government, according to agency figures released Thursday and interviews with staff. That’s raising concerns among current and former employees about the agency’s ability to ensure the reliability of the region’s electrical grid.

About 200 of the agency’s 3,000 employees have accepted the Trump administration’s offer to resign and receive eight months of severance pay, which the administration sent via an email with the subject line “Fork in the Road.”

The employees taking the buyout include linemen, engineers, substation operators and power dispatchers — positions that take years of apprenticeship to learn.

[Oregon GOP leader cites false examples of government waste from parody X account](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

Oregon’s Senate Republican leader shared debunked claims from a social media parody account about federal government spending in a state-issued email newsletter decrying “fear-mongering and misinformation.”

Sen. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, dedicated the first 400 words of his official legislative newsletter on Monday night to “cutting through the rhetoric” on several of President Donald Trump’s recent executive orders.

[Oregon U.S. Rep. Salinas pushes for mental health care in bill](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Ben Botkin

U.S. Rep. Andrea Salinas wants to set a minimum standard of three free behavioral health visits a year for people enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare.

Under Salinas' bill, people enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid would not have to pay copays for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment or management of a behavioral health condition.

[Oregon, 13 other states sue to challenge billionaire Elon Musk's access to sensitive government data](#)
Associated Press

Attorneys general from 14 states challenged the authority of billionaire [Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency](#) to access [sensitive government data](#) and exercise "virtually unchecked power" in a lawsuit filed Thursday. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Washington, D.C., says the actions taken by Musk at the helm of DOGE can only be taken by a nominated and Senate-confirmed official.

The attorneys general asked the court to order Musk to identify ways that "any data obtained through unlawful agency access was used," destroy "such unauthorized access in his or DOGE's possession" and bar Musk and DOGE from ordering changes in the disbursement of public funds, canceling government contracts, taking steps to dismantle agencies and more.

[Lawmakers want to speed compensation to innocent Oregonians convicted of crimes | News](#)
Portland Tribune | By Jim Redden

After the social justice protests following the Minneapolis police murder of George Floyd five years ago, the 2022 Oregon Legislature passed a law allowing those wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for felony crimes to be compensated by the state.

But three years after the law took effect, only four of the 40 former convicts pursuing compensation have received it.

Now the 2025 Oregon Legislature is considering a bill to reform the process and to guarantee that more of those wrongly convicted and imprisoned are compensated in a timely manner, as intended. Senate Bill 1007 is co-sponsored by the original sponsors of the 2022 law, Democrat Sen. Floyd Prozanski of Eugene and Springfield, and Republican **Sen. Kim Thatcher of Keizer**. They are joined by 12 lawmakers from both parties from throughout the state.

"The current compensation legislation was intended to support Oregon exonerees, and instead it's causing them more harm with lengthy litigation processes and denials," Sen. **Kim Thatcher** said. "We have an obligation to those wrongfully incarcerated and also to our constituent taxpayers to fix the Oregon Justice for Exonerees Act so it truly provides justice, and SB 1007 does just that."

[Former OLCC Spirits Director Sues the State Over Termination](#)
Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

The reverberations continue from a scandal that shook the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission in 2023. On Feb. 10, Chris Mayton, the agency's former distilled spirits director—a job that put him at the center of the OLCC's handling of high-end whiskeys at issue in the scandal—filed suit in Marion County Circuit Court against the state of Oregon, the OLCC and various individual state employees involved in the release of agency records concerning Mayton.

TRUMP

[Oregon member of Congress doubles down on expletive with double meaning aimed at Trump](#)
Oregon Live | By Zane Sparling

U.S. [Rep. Maxine Dexter, D-Oregon](#), notched her first viral moment during a Tuesday speech to federal workers when she told President Trump Donald to, in so many words, flap off.

HEALTH

[Providence tells striking nurses they will lose health insurance on Feb. 28](#)
Oregon Live | By Kristine de Leon

Providence Health & Services in Oregon warned striking nurses Thursday that their health insurance will expire at the end of the month if their walkout continues. The strike, which began Jan. 10, has now lasted 36 days and involves nearly 5,000 nurses at all eight Providence hospitals across the state.

The two sides have yet to resume meetings to negotiate new proposals.

['I lived being denied menopause care': Oregon lawmaker promotes bill requiring more insurers to cover it](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

In the complex world of insurance, with a multitude of companies and coverage plans, it's unclear precisely which health care plans in Oregon don't cover treatments for symptoms that arise in the years before, during and after menopause. But Boshart Davis' bill aims to require those under the authority of the state to — with some restrictions — offer coverage of treatments such as estrogen and progesterone, antidepressants and medications to stave off osteoporosis. The bill specifically names the Oregon Educators Benefit Board and the Public Employees' Benefit Board.

[Marion County farmland dump pit operators want to reopen](#)

Statesman Journal | By Tracy Loew

Owners of two controversial dump sites on Marion County farmland are trying to restart operations, months after the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality shut them down.

[Oregon's top vet lab looks to protect against new threats](#)

Capital Press | By Kyle Odegard

For decades, the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has served veterinarians, livestock producers and pet owners across the state, quickly processing samples and identifying diseases. Lately, the Oregon State University facility also has been on the frontlines protecting human health against emerging zoonotic infectious threats — diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

Samples can't wait with so much on the line for farmers and the public, said Kurt Williams, OVDL director. So OVDL employees are working late hours on tight timelines to help halt the spread of diseases, and doing so in cramped and rundown buildings. Williams said the situation risks burnout.

Williams said despite funding increases from the Oregon Legislature, more resources are needed.

From fiscal 2020 to 2023, the OVDL budget was in the range of \$2.2 million to \$2.4 million. It increased to \$3.1 million in 2024 and then to more than \$5 million for increased testing of CWD and other illnesses. Renewed funding, with a slight increase, is before the Legislature. But Williams said that doesn't solve the OVDL's budget problem given current demands.

Every week he sees something new and he's on the lookout for troubling signs. "Infectious disease is always out there lurking and changing," Williams said.

[Oregon pays \\$1M to prisoner who claimed he lost sight from poor care](#)

Oregon Live | By Noelle Crombie

An Oregon prisoner whose lawyers said his eye "slowly, painfully died inside his head" after "botched eye surgery" while [in Department of Corrections custody](#) settled his claims of [medical negligence](#) for \$1 million.

EDUCATION

[Commentary: Better grad rates but worse test scores befuddle lawmakers, validate reformers](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | Opinion by Tim Nesbitt

The responses from the governor and the education establishment at the state and local level were, according to the report, "crickets." But even worse was the defensiveness of some Democratic lawmakers and the reflexive overreach of their Republican counterparts.

When presented with the test score data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, two Democratic legislators on the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education rallied to the cause of defending the indefensible. Test scores don't tell the whole story, they said; many kids are smarter than the test results would suggest.

Not that their Republican counterparts were any more reasonable. They led with vouchers for private school alternatives, which one can view as both raising a white flag for our public school system and waving a red flag at Democrats. But, compared to silence and denial, at least one can say Republicans came out swinging.

[Oregon spent millions to grow manufacturing, tech workforces. Educators say it's their turn.](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Over the past few years, the Oregon Legislature has responded to industry-wide labor shortages in manufacturing, tech and health care by directing millions of dollars to workforce development programs. Now, education advocates say it should do the same for child care and preschool teachers.

State Rep. Courtney Neron, D-Wilsonville, introduced [House Bill 3011](#) to direct \$20 million over the next two years to growing the number and size of early childhood education degree programs at Oregon's seven public universities and 17 community colleges.

A 2023 analysis from Oregon State University found that, statewide, there were enough early child care educators for just one in five kids under 2 and about one in three kids between ages 3 and 5. In 12 of Oregon's 36 counties, less than 10% of kids 2 and younger had access to early childhood education or child care.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

[Editorial: Oregon cities need help with infrastructure to build housing](#)

Bulletin Editorial Board

Gov. Tina Kotek renewed a challenge for Oregon to do more on housing in her state of the state speech in January: "I am impatient about the pace of progress, and some days just plain angry that we're in this predicament at all and that we can't move faster to get more housing built. Please, my friends, let's do more, let's be bolder."

Riggs told us that if the state is serious about treating housing with urgency, it should be flexible when allocating money. It should pass HB 2018 this year. It would allow Madras to spend the \$1.4 million for public road improvements, utility connections and sewer and water improvements.

Kotek's spokesperson told us Kotek has a plan to fund more water, sewer and other infrastructure projects in a programmatic way. It will be through House Bill 3031.

PUBLIC SAFETY

[Federal wrongful death suit filed against DEA agent who struck and killed Salem bicyclist](#)

Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein

The family of a [woman who was killed](#) when a federal narcotics agent blew through a stop sign and struck her as she was riding her bicycle in Salem filed a wrongful death lawsuit Wednesday against the agent, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the city of Salem and state Department of Justice.