

Oregon News

REVENUE FORECAST

[Oregon economists update kicker, general fund projections](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

Oregon lawmakers will have an estimated \$38.2 billion available to spend on the two-year budget that begins July 1, according to this week's forecast. In 2023, lawmakers approved a two-year \$31.9 billion general fund budget.

State economists estimate taxpayers will see a \$1.73 billion "kicker" in 2026 — a \$68 million decrease from December's forecast.

Trade issues were likely to have a powerful impact on Oregon, given its geography as a Pacific Coast state "sensitive" to trade with Asia, Riccadonna said.

But the "fast-breaking" developments at the start of the Trump Administration haven't resulted in material change for the national outlook, Riccadonna told reporters.

"As things currently stand, the economy seems to be holding up well," he said.

Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham, D-The Dalles, expressed concern about the state's job creation, which has favored government, private education and health services and a slow population growth rate.

"If we keep losing working-age Oregonians and making it harder for businesses to thrive, this won't be sustainable in the long run," **Bonham** said. "We need to focus on policies that support job creation in industries that actually build things, not just grow government."

[Oregon lawmakers have \\$350 million more for next budget, economist says](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhart

And strong wage growth in Oregon has signaled to economists that they can expect more in personal income and other taxes over the next two years.

The forecast delivered Wednesday included about \$550 million more in tax revenue for the 2025-27 budget cycle than predicted just [three months ago](#). That increase is offset somewhat by a roughly \$200 million reduction in the amount of money the state is expected to have left over when the current budget ends June 30.

The forecast delivered Wednesday included about \$550 million more in tax revenue for the 2025-27 budget cycle than predicted just [three months ago](#). That increase is offset somewhat by a roughly \$200 million reduction in the amount of money the state is expected to have left over when the current budget ends June 30.

Republicans, meanwhile, signaled they were less concerned by Trump's policies than by Oregon's business climate. Riccadonna's [data showed](#) that, while Oregon has seen jobs increases in health care, education and some other sectors, it has lost workers in areas like manufacturing, finance and retail.

"Oregon is raking in tax dollars, but the foundation of our economy is weakening," **Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**, said in a statement. "If we keep losing working-age Oregonians and making it harder for businesses to thrive, this won't be sustainable in the long run."

[Latest Oregon economic forecast shows more money, but federal government leaves future murky](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

Chaotic federal announcements about taxes, tariffs, mass firings of federal employees and spending cuts haven't yet affected Oregon's economic forecast, the state's chief economist reported Wednesday.

For now, according to chief economist Carl Riccadonna and senior economist Michael Kennedy, Oregon lawmakers can expect to have about \$38.2 billion to spend in the state's next two-year budget. That's \$350 million more than they thought they would have at the last forecast in November.

Since Riccadonna started as chief economist last fall, his top task has been to create more accurate forecasts to reduce the growing kicker payouts. But Oregonians can still expect a large kicker in 2026:

The latest forecast pegs it at \$1.726 billion, slightly lower than the \$1.8 billion predicted in November. Higher-income Oregonians who pay more in taxes get higher kicker payments.

[Oregon's economic forecast reveals \\$1.7 billion kicker for taxpayers](#)

KATU

Despite a slowdown in hiring and limited job creation, labor conditions remain relatively healthy, according to the report.

Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham expressed concerns about the state's economic foundation, stating, "Oregon is raking in tax dollars, but the foundation of our economy is weakening. We keep losing working-age Oregonians and making it harder for businesses to thrive, this won't be sustainable in the long run."

Bonham emphasized the need for policies that support job creation in industries that "actually build things, not just grow government."

[Oregon 'kicker' rebate expected to be \\$1.7 billion](#)

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

Economists delivered the news Tuesday while they briefed state lawmakers on the latest forecast for the state budget. They predicted state revenues will likely be up \$350 million for the next budget cycle. That represents a 1% increase in the projected \$38.2 billion of general fund money.

POLITICS

[Oregon beaver relocation proposal draws skepticism](#)

Capital Press | By Mateusz Perkowski

Under Senate Bill 354, state fish and wildlife officials would create a relocation program to replenish beaver populations in Central and Eastern Oregon, where they were depleted by historic trapping. "We have an abundance of beavers, but on the east side they do not," said **Sen. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford**.

Upon learning of the dilemma, which has resulted in the construction of artificial beaver dams in some areas, **Brock Smith** said he was spurred to share his region's good fortune. "I've got plenty of beavers we can use," he said. "Anything we can do to bring back that natural landscape will be a benefit to the state," he said. However, Brock Smith's recent pitch to the Senate Natural Resources Committee encountered a skeptical response from its vice chair, **Todd Nash, R-Enterprise**, who noted that past beaver relocations haven't enjoyed much success in his area. "We can't seem to get them to stay, and it seems to do with predation," Nash said. Beavers released in remote areas have tended to quickly move closer to human civilization, where they're less likely to fall prey to cougars, he said. "They don't like to be challenged by the predators," Nash said. "I'm not sure it would work under current conditions."

[Legislators push to prohibit net pen aquaculture in Oregon](#)

OPB | By Alejandro Figueroa

Rep. Mark Gamba, D-Milwaukie, is sponsoring [House Bill 2965](#). He said the practice of net pens, which are large floating pens, or cages, can degrade aquatic ecosystems and harm native fish populations. He pointed to a 2017 disaster when a net pen collapsed on the Puget Sound, releasing over [200,000 non-native Atlantic Salmon](#) into the wild. That pushed [Washington state](#) policymakers to ban the practice there earlier this year.

Oregon does not have commercial fish farms that use net pens in its waters, an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spokesperson told OPB.

But opposing groups say the legislation will prematurely stifle the industry before it even has a chance to develop. [Oregon ranks well below](#) its neighbors California and Washington in aquaculture seafood production.

[Laid off fed worker warns of threat to Oregon's wildlife protections amid more cuts nationwide](#)

KOIN | By Anthony Kustura

Thousands of probationary employees have already been fired, including Ali Mizell, who formerly worked as a survey technician for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the past four months. Mizell's work involved measuring and mapping land to protect wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. She said there aren't enough people left to handle the workload, putting critical wildlife and land protections at risk — from Oregon to Hawaii, and the Pacific islands.

Last year, Oregon had over 29,000 federal jobs, making up 1.5% of the workforce, with average salaries of \$92,000 — that's 36% higher than the state average, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

Federal workers can appeal their layoffs.

[Hearing set for Oregon law to compensate wrongfully convicted](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

Lawmakers, advocates and exonerees say the implementation of an Oregon law to [compensate the wrongfully convicted](#) has failed and that "substantive and technical obstacles" need to be addressed to meet their original intent.

"The current compensation legislation was intended to support Oregon exonerees, and instead it's causing them more harm with lengthy litigation processes and denials," said **Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer** who is sponsoring [Senate Bill 1007](#) with Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene.

"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," **Thatcher** said.

[In Extraordinary Hearing, ODOT Explains Billion-Dollar Budget Blunder](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

About one hour and ten minutes into a hearing on the state highway fund, Travis Brouwer, ODOT's assistant director and top finance official told lawmakers how the agency made a more than \$1 billion error in its 2023-25 budget.

To put the "error" in perspective, a January audit of ODOT pegged the actual damage as \$1.1 billion out of a \$5.9 billion biennial budget. In other words, the agency expected to have nearly 19% more revenue than it actually generated.

Brouwer termed the error "an overestimation of federal funding in our project delivery and local government budgets by about \$1 billion."

In the audit, first reported by the Salem *Statesman Journal*, auditors found that ODOT had failed to perform a basic accounting function: reconciling actual revenues to the projected revenues from its budget.

"An over-reliance on the highway cash flow model and a lack of understanding on how Statewide Transportation Improvement Program programming impacts that model drove the budget error," the auditors wrote.

"I'm totally disappointed and just cannot believe what I'm hearing," State Sen. Mark Meek (D-Gladstone) said to Brouwer. "Don't you have any reconciliation process?"

But on Wednesday morning, state Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis (R-Albany), the vice chair of the Joint Transportation Committee, said ODOT has a lot of work to do before her caucus will support additional funding for the agency.

"A billion-dollar budget mistake coupled with a more than 300% increase on the cost of the Abernethy Bridge [on Interstate 205] are just two examples, although massive, of problems that need to be fixed and accounted for before we ask Oregonians for another dollar," Boshart Davis said.

[Oregon schools should reveal absenteeism in real time to fix terrible problem, lawmakers say](#)

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

Nearly every school in Oregon has [a problem](#): Too many students miss far too many school days. But real-time data on the magnitude of the issue is — ironically — absent.

Instead, the state Department of Education only [reports chronic absenteeism rates](#), defined as missing 10% or more school days, once a year, typically more than four months after the year-long absenteeism ends, in late fall.

This year, that data set showed that 34% of the state's students missed roughly 17 days of school during the 2023-2024 school year, putting them at risk of not learning to read, do math or graduate from high school. Oregon's rate is far higher than pre-COVID levels and well above the national average.

[‘Deeply troubling’: Criminal cases against PSU protesters dropped due to DA evidence mishap](#)

Oregon Live | By Zaeem Shaikh

Six people criminally charged in connection with [last year's pro-Palestinian protest](#) at Portland State University's main library had their cases dropped over a mistake by the Multnomah County district attorney's office.

And District Attorney Nathan Vasquez's explanation for the mistake — that his office didn't know the city of Portland retained additional Police Bureau video footage of the May 2 protest and therefore didn't turn over crucial video evidence to lawyers for the accused — doesn't satisfy defense attorneys in the cases.

[Bill on wildfire prevention work could give utilities immunity from lawsuits](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhart

A bill that would establish minimum wildfire prevention standards for electric utilities in exchange for an annual certificate from the Oregon Public Utility Commission could give them immunity from being held accountable in lawsuits, lawyers say.

If passed, [House Bill 3666](#) would give utilities a state-sanctioned defense against lawsuits when their equipment starts fires, leaving customers holding the bag for damages caused by multi-billion dollar companies that provide electricity to nearly 75% of Oregonians, lawyers and survivors warn.

[Oregon resumes automatic voter registration, paused for months because of DMV errors](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

Oregon's automatic voter registration program, paused since October after state officials learned more than 1,600 people who might not have been U.S. citizens were wrongly registered to vote, resumed on Wednesday.

[Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek resumes ‘motor voter’ registrations after nearly five months](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhart

The Oregon Department of Transportation on Wednesday released a long-awaited review of the state's Motor Voter program, the 2016 law that adds residents to the voter rolls unless they proactively decline. Gov. Tina Kotek [ordered the data review](#) in September, following revelations that [hundreds of people](#) had been automatically registered to vote in error after interacting with the DMV. The agency is supposed to register people via Motor Voter only if they show proof of citizenship, but staffers forwarded some people to elections officials who had offered no such documentation — or even showed foreign passports.

[The report](#), produced by the consulting firm Deloitte, finds DMV officials have taken steps “that provide adequate confidence” errors will be eliminated, ensuring only eligible voters are registered — though it notes the fixes might not be sustainable. The findings prompted Kotek to lift a pause on automatic registrations she instituted in October.

[Listen: Oregon Rep. Cliff Bentz defends cutting federal spending, discusses Medicaid cuts](#)

OPB | By Amelia Templeton, Andrew Theen

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ore., said Wednesday that the nation's spending on Medicaid programs is unsustainable, and he urged patience as Republicans in Congress formulate their plan to dramatically reduce spending on the health care program.

[Senate committee endorses former Oregon Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer as labor secretary](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

With Democratic support, former Oregon Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer cleared a key hurdle Thursday morning in her quest to become the nation's next secretary of labor.

[Almost 200 new shelter beds paused as Multnomah Co. faces deficit](#)

KATU

The Portland City Council and Multnomah County held a joint session Wednesday on the local response to the region's homeless issue.

County leaders said the Joint Office needs \$420 million dollars next year to maintain its current service level but projects to only receive \$316 million from its funding sources. County leaders said the deficit will require the Joint Office to scale back its projected gains in new shelter beds unless funding it gets funding from the state and Metro.

The Joint Office noted it's still projected to gain 329 shelter beds that were already paid for and operationally budgeted for in the 2025-2026 cycle. Budget uncertainty will remove 171 new shelter beds from the projected increases.

The city of Portland's homeless services plan faces a shortfall of \$30.15 million, which accounts for projects supported by the Joint Office's current budget level. The city expects much of that to be covered by state funds in Governor Tina Kotek's Emergency order; it plans to raise the rest through grants and private funding.

[Fire at former Blue Heron paper mill in Oregon City accidental, officials say](#)

KATU

Clackamas Fire officials said Wednesday that the massive [three-alarm fire at the former Blue Heron paper mill last month](#) was started by accident.

The agency said homeless people were living inside the vacant structures and that witnesses had seen warming fires.

Crews found makeshift wood-burning stoves and combustible materials inside.

HOUSING

[Portland breaks ground on affordable housing in Jade District](#)

KATU

City officials broke ground Wednesday on The Jade Apartments, a development aimed at providing culturally responsive housing in one of Portland's most diverse neighborhoods.

The Jade Apartments will offer 40 income-limited homes, with five units reserved for households earning less than 30% of the area median income.

The nonprofit Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) will provide residents with services such as financial literacy, job training, access to a food pantry and transportation, and health programs including yoga and a community garden.