

Oregon News

Oregon Democratic state Rep. Hoa Nguyen announces cancer diagnosis

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

Nguyen shared few details, including what type of cancer, but said her staff is continuing to work for constituents.

POLITICS

Contractors say Gov. Tina Kotek's union-friendly executive order is unlawful. Some legal experts aren't so sure

Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes

On Friday, more than a dozen contractors and business groups filed a lawsuit in Marion County Circuit Court against Kotek, claiming that she overstepped her legal authority in issuing the order and violated several Oregon laws.

The outcome will directly impact Oregon's transportation spending and construction workforce, as lawmakers in Salem [work to fill](#) what officials say is a massive \$1.75 billion budget gap at the state's transportation agency.

Oregon lawmakers from both parties call for greater accountability from state agencies

Oregon Live | By Sami Edge

[Oregon lawmakers](#) from both parties say they are determined to find a way this session for the Legislature to hold [state agencies more accountable](#) for spending and outcomes.

Lawmakers are moving on that front in ways both subtle and not. House leaders trained committee chairs this year on the role they play in overseeing state agencies. Budget writers have asked their committees to scrutinize how agencies have spent money they've previously dolled out. And leaders are building accountability goals into major legislative priorities, including an expected multibillion dollar transportation package to shore up Oregon's roads and bridges.

Democrats tapped Republican Sen. **Bruce Starr of Dundee** to develop an accountability proposal for the transportation package. Reps Ben Bowman, D-Tigard, and Kim Wallan, R-Medford, are together proposing a bill that would hire an auditor to look into issues of importance to the Legislature, instead of relying solely on audits from agencies or the secretary of state. And House leaders have found common ground in setting accountability as a guiding principle for 2025.

The Department of Transportation is facing particular scrutiny this year. Lawmakers are gearing up to spend huge money to fix Oregon's roads, but have qualms about the department's performance on past projects. It hasn't finished two signature projects that lawmakers funded in 2017, both of which have spiraled far over budget. And department leaders told lawmakers on Monday, after reporting from the [Statesman Journal](#), that they had made a \$1 billion error in budgeting for this biennium, a revelation that has caused consternation at the Capitol this week.

Providence nurses' new contracts: Here's what's changing as nurses return to work after strike

Oregon Live | By Kristine de Leon

Nearly 5,000 nurses at all eight Providence hospitals across Oregon have returned to work after voting this week to approve new labor contracts, ending a 46-day strike.

The agreements include raises of as much as 42% over three years — applied retroactively in some cases — a new understanding on staffing levels and moves toward a new, union-administered health insurance plan.

Oregon lawmakers eye bills to boost trade ahead of tariffs

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

The first bill under discussion was [House Bill 3100](#), the Oregon Trade Resilience and Developing Exports (TRADE) bill.

Under the bill, this strategy must include hiring consultants to represent Oregon in foreign markets, support outbound and inbound trade for government and businesses, promote Oregon exports abroad

and foreign direct investment in the state and must provide technical assistance to Oregon businesses impacted by foreign tariffs.

The bill requests \$3,200,000 in lottery funds to implement provisions in the bipartisan bill, whose chief sponsors include Committee Chair Daniel Nguyen (D-Lake Oswego & SW Portland) and Vice-Chair Rep. Ed Diehl (R-Stayton).

The second bill discussed during the hearing was [House Bill 2756](#), the Global Oregon Trade Offices (GO TO) bill, which would create the Oregon-Taiwan Trade Center and the Oregon-Vietnam Trade Center. The bill appropriates \$500,000 to the Oregon Business Development Department to establish the trade centers.

[Commentary: New proposal takes aim at threats to public officials](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Randy Stapilus

The hearing concerned [Senate Bill 473](#), which would create a new crime of threatening a public official. It was proposed by the city of Eugene, and sponsored by Senator Floyd Prozanski, D- Eugene, who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee. The measure would target a person who “knowingly delivers or conveys, directly or indirectly and by any means, a threatening communication to a public official or a member of the public official’s immediate family,” and it could be reasonably interpreted as a warning of violence. It would be a misdemeanor first time out, and felony for repeat instances.

[Federal nitrate pollution lawsuit against Eastern Oregon farms moves forward](#)

OPB | By Antonio Sierra

A federal lawsuit accusing agricultural businesses of polluting groundwater in the Lower Umatilla Basin is moving forward and changing venues.

Last February, five residents living in the basin [sued](#) some of the region’s top agricultural operations – Beef Northwest Feeders, Lamb Weston Holdings, Madison Ranches, the Port of Morrow and Threemile Canyon Farms – for claims including negligence and violating the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The residents want compensation and environmental remediation, among other things. The businesses tried to get the case dismissed by arguing federal courts don’t have jurisdiction over nitrate regulation. They claimed that authority belongs with state agencies like the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Both agencies have lately taken steps to fix the issues, like introducing the [Nitrate Reduction Plan](#) last year.

[Oregon Democrats in U.S. House, others warn that firings could mean dire wildfire season](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Lynne Terry

Oregon’s Democratic U.S. House members — and other Democrats in the House — warned this week that firing firefighters and employees at agencies that manage federal land could have drastic consequences for the upcoming fire season.

“These cuts, compounded by the decision to freeze federal funding for a long list of critical programs and grants, could leave our public lands more vulnerable than ever to the threat of wildfires, which are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change,” they said in a letter sent Wednesday. Last year, wildfires burned a record 1.9 million acres in Oregon, just four years after the Labor Day fires killed nine people and burned thousands of homes.

[Oregon Democrats call for restoring US Forest Service workers](#)

Statesman Journal | By Zach Urness

Although the USDA said firefighters were exempt, current and former Forest Service employees said critical work such as prescribed burning and forest thinning had been slowed by the cuts.

“We need Forest Service trail workers back on the job, thinning trees and removing combustible material, so we can save lives and property,” said Oregon Senate Majority Leader Kayse Jama, D–northeast Portland. “It’s not clear whether the personnel firings were legal to begin with.”

[‘Turmoil at the top’: More than half of Oregon’s prison doctors on leave, fired or left in last year](#)

Oregon Live | By Ted Sickinger

They are among 10 Oregon Department of Corrections doctors — more than half of the 18 physicians authorized in the agency's budget — who have been on paid administrative leave, have resigned or been fired during the last year. While some of the doctors have returned from leave, others are still out and open positions remain unfilled, leaving only nine doctors working at the moment —jeopardizing health care for the state's 12,000 prisoners and deepening an ongoing medical crisis, The Oregonian/OregonLive has found.

Some of the doctors' paid leaves stretched out for months and in one case for nearly three years. Based on pay rates in effect last year, the leaves cost taxpayers approximately \$1 million in 2024 alone, according to The Oregonian/OregonLive's analysis. Their long absences — sometimes without explanation — further exacerbated the prison system's inability to provide timely and appropriate health care for prisoners.

[Oregon House passes bill designed to curb predatory lending](#)

Oregon Live | By Matthew Kish

A bill designed to protect Oregonians from predatory loans passed out of the Oregon House on Thursday.

Oregon caps the interest rate on short-term consumer loans at 36%, but some out-of-state lenders can charge more because of a federal law known as the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act.

[House Bill 2561](#), which passed in the chamber 33-23, would opt Oregon out of that federal law and require lenders based elsewhere to comply with the state limit. It passed on a mostly party-line vote, with one Democrat voting against the bill and no Republicans voting in favor of it.

[Children can be charged with prostitution in Oregon. Prosecutors want to keep it that way](#)

Oregon Live | By Hillary Borrud

Children who are sold for sex in Oregon would no longer face the possibility of being charged with the crime of prostitution under a [proposal](#) lawmakers are considering this session.

Supporters of the legislation say it's wrong for state law to treat children as criminals if they are victims of trafficking and sex abuse who have experienced substantial trauma.

But opponents say prosecutors already approach sexually exploited teens as victims in practice and changing the law would take away a crucial tool for authorities to go after traffickers.

[House Bill 3584](#) currently has bipartisan sponsors in the state House and Senate. But once again prosecutors are raising concerns and one of the chief sponsors is moderating her hope for action.

The bill would amend Oregon's prostitution law to clarify that the misdemeanor crime can be committed only by an adult who is at least 18 years old. It would also allow officials to place children in protective custody if it reasonably appears they are engaged in or at imminent risk of engaging in a commercial sex act.

[6 Republicans join Democrats, pass Medicaid funding bill in the Oregon House](#)

OPB | By Amelia Templeton

A bill that would raise billions in federal dollars for Oregon's Medicaid program and allocate a substantial portion back to hospitals passed in the Oregon House of Representatives Thursday. It now advances to the Senate.

It passed 40-15, with six Republicans voting to approve the bill along with the Democratic majority.

Fifteen Republicans, including Minority Leader Christine Drazan, voted against it.

[The bill, HB 2010](#), extends a pair of taxes through 2032.

The taxes are a 2% assessment on health insurance plans and managed care organizations and a 6% assessment on hospitals' net revenue.

The taxes provide about a quarter of the total funding for the Oregon Health Plan, the state's Medicaid program that pays for health care for people living near the poverty line. That's due to a federal match

the state can take advantage of in funding Medicaid, roughly \$3 for every state dollar invested in the program. Every state uses some form of provider tax to finance Medicaid, except Alaska.

[GOP tax cut plans may depend on savings from Medicaid. What is it and who relies on it?](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Jennifer Shutt

Republicans in Congress have gotten a crash course in Medicaid during the last few weeks, as they eye the health care program for lower-income Americans as a source for hundreds of billions of dollars in savings to pay for tax cuts.

The 72 million Americans who rely on Medicaid, especially those represented by GOP lawmakers, as well as state leaders nervous about the effect on their budgets, are closely watching what Congress does.

EDUCATION

[Lawmakers Grill Researchers Over Call for Increased Education Spending](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

In a tense discussion of education funding in a state where dismal student outcomes are drawing scrutiny, experts from the American Institutes for Research took center stage Wednesday night at a joint meeting of the Oregon House and Senate education committees.

They were there to answer hot-button questions about a report they produced to reevaluate a measurement called the Quality Education Model. The QEM projects the cost to adequately educate students statewide. AIR's [commissioned report](#) suggests Oregon needs to spend a lot more on education than the QEM asks for to produce better student outcomes.

The report is a win for school funding advocates, who have long cited the Legislature's inability to meet the QEM's funding recommendations as evidence lawmakers are to blame for poor performance in schools. In their report, AIR's researchers wrote that the QEM, which hinges on achieving just one outcome—a 90% graduation rate for Oregon students—was too narrow in its scope. In contrast, their own model factored in graduation rate, reducing chronic absenteeism, and improving reading and mathematics results.

[A new report says Oregon should boost school budgets by around \\$3 billion. Lawmakers have questions.](#)

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

A state-commissioned [school finance report](#) that found Oregon needs to spend far more per pupil to achieve better reading and math results came in for pointed, and sometimes skeptical, questioning this week from key Democratic lawmakers.

At a [three-hour hearing](#) that stretched late into Wednesday evening, legislators on both the House and Senate education committees tried to wrap their minds around the American Institutes for Research's [detailed analysis](#) of the state's decades-old funding formula.

The six-volume study from the nonpartisan thinktank is the first time in decades that the formula has gotten a top-to-bottom look by school finance experts from outside Oregon. They concluded that the typical school needs about 33% more funding per student to give every child a shot at academic success, or about \$3 billion above planned spending levels.

[Deep cuts to school mental health, STD clinic, medical examiners could hit Multnomah County](#)

Oregon Live | By Austin de Dion

For decades, [Multnomah County](#) has deployed mental health specialists to dozens of schools across the Portland metro area.

But that service and other critical health programs could be on the chopping block as the county grapples with a [\\$21 million shortfall](#) to its general fund, according to a budget proposal released by the county health department last week.