

Oregon News

HOUSING

[Kotek bill would expand where duplexes, triplexes could be built - oregonlive.com](#)

The Oregonian/OregonLive | By Jonathan Bach

Gov. Tina Kotek is asking Oregon lawmakers to expand where and how “missing middle” housing such as duplexes and triplexes can be constructed.

[House Bill 2138](#) aims to build on one of Kotek’s major legislative accomplishments in her tenure as Oregon House speaker, when she championed a law in 2019 to allow middle housing in areas previously zoned for single-detached homes.

The thrust of HB 2138 is to permit middle housing in more places, including on unincorporated land in urban areas.

The first two years of Kotek’s big push for homebuilding yielded results that [won’t get Oregon where it needs to alleviate its shortage](#). The first half of her administration coincided with high interest rates, skittishness from investors and slowing population growth that [brought new construction to a crawl](#).

[Providence says it’s ready to resume contract talks with all striking workers - oregonlive.com](#)

The Oregonian/OregonLive | By Kristine de Leon

It’s a move toward resolving a strike now in its fifth day. The health system and union negotiators haven’t met since [the strike plans were announced Dec. 30](#).

Providence, one of the largest health systems in Oregon, halted talks with the Oregon Nurses Association, which represents nurses and other frontline health workers, after the union delivered a required 10-day strike notice. The health system said it needed the time to prepare for the work stoppage and that it would reopen talks once hospital operations stabilized.

[Gov. Tina Kotek’s fate likely rests with homeless crisis • Oregon Capital Chronicle](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | Commentary by Randy Stapilus

The focus of the next two years in Oregon politics is likely to follow the contours of one of the biggest issues in the state: homelessness.

The stakes are both social and political. Oregon voters have not unseated an incumbent governor since 1978, but Gov. Tina Kotek has reason for concern. Winner by a modest plurality in 2022, she has polled poorly since, and in two months earlier this year [Morning Consult](#) marked her as the least popular governor in the country.

Nearly 23,000 people in Oregon remain unhoused, according to last year’s federal point-in-time count. Kotek’s initiatives have revolved around expanding housing stock, a subject she has tackled long before she became governor.

Part of the problem has been that homelessness seems like an amorphous blob, hard to define, enumerate, even accurately describe.

What’s been missing is fine-grained information about the individuals who are unhoused: their circumstances, why they have no housing, what particular obstacles they face and what it would take to get them settled. All have individual stories. Because the unhoused population is so varied, the answers can come only case by case.

Portland, Gresham and Multnomah County [joined a similar effort](#) in December 2021 (to [Built for Zero](#), a national effort to end homelessness that focuses on veterans and on the “chronically” homeless), and Multnomah officials said that after two years of intensive research, data from it will be ready for use early this year.

How the Legislature reacts to what is being learned now on the local level may say a lot about how Oregon deals with homelessness. And even about Kotek's rationale for reelection two years from now.

[Portland vets face return to homelessness as affordable housing program fails to meet VA standards](#)

KPTV | By Karli Olson

The homeless veterans living in the affordable housing facility in the former Ramada Inn by the Portland Airport have been asked to leave by Wednesday evening.

The housing facility, run by the Eugene-based nonprofit Reveille Foundation, was advertised to provide mental and social services, meals, and a fresh start.

Veterans reported living with black mold, a rat infestation, barely any food, and none of the services they were promised. Shortly after our report aired, the City of Portland inspected the property and found 16 property maintenance code violations. In a Dec. 24 report obtained by FOX 12 Investigates, the city reported maintenance violations like damage to the ceiling and walls, broken light fixtures, and fire and electrical hazards.

Reveille CEO Yamamori also sent the following statement:

"We are coordinating efforts to move veterans to other housing. Further plans for Reveille in Portland have not been confirmed. We intend to focus on getting those who need to move transitioned at this time."

Yamamori did offer to pay for hotel rooms until the end of the month, but Stallworth said beyond that, he hasn't received any further housing options from the VA.

[Oregon farmers say new farmworker housing rules could lead to workforce shortages | Jefferson Public Radio](#)

OPB | By Alejandro Figueroa

Oregon officials are adopting significant updates to farmworker housing. Farmworker advocates say the rules don't address all of their concerns, while farmers say they can't afford the changes.

But farm groups say complying with those structural changes will be costly, and could put smaller family farms out of business.

"After years of devastating crop losses and brutal market conditions, taking on massive loans isn't just unrealistic — it's operationally fatal," Angela Bailey, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau, [wrote in a statement](#). "Meanwhile, off-farm workforce housing is virtually non-existent in many rural areas. So, where exactly does Oregon OSHA expect workers to live during the critical harvest season? This is a disaster in the making for family agriculture in Oregon."

"These rules are not helping to solve the housing crisis in this state; they are adding to it," Lesley Tamura, a pear farmer in Hood River, and the chair of the Columbia Fruit Growers Association said.

A 2023 [Oregon Housing and Community Services Department](#) report found poor housing conditions and inadequate bathrooms were the most common problems that farmworkers described with on-farm housing.

While the new rules address some of those issues, like increasing the amount of toilets per person in a house and requiring locking shower stalls and changing rooms, Sonato said she still finds the new rules disappointing.

"We still remain deeply concerned with the low standards of the rule," she said. "There are some major priorities that weren't included in these final rules and that we had brought up many, many times."

HEALTH CARE

[OHSU patient's face catches fire after surgical staff swabbed his skin with alcohol, \\$900,000 lawsuit says](#)

The Oregonian/OregonLive | By Aimee Green

According to the lawsuit, then 51-year-old John Michael Murdoch was “awake and conscious” when a spark from a surgical tool ignited his skin during the December 2022 surgery. The tool had a history of sparking and the fire was fueled by the use of oxygen and unevaporated isopropyl alcohol, according to the lawsuit and the attorney who filed the lawsuit.

Sara Hottman, an OHSU spokesperson, declined to comment, citing patient privacy laws. Hottman said the physician who is also listed in the lawsuit as a defendant — Dr. Adam Howard — couldn’t comment for the same reason.

Oregon Medical Board records show Howard finished his otolaryngology residency in 2022 in Illinois and became licensed to practice medicine in Oregon that same year. In January 2024, about a year after the lawsuit says Murdoch’s face caught on fire, [Howard’s medical license switched to “Lapsed” status](#).

Although OHSU’s website still lists him as an instructor, Howard appears to be working for a university in [West Virginia](#), where he is [now licensed](#) to practice medicine.

[**How Oregon health officials are preparing for change under Trump**](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Nick Budnick

Oregonians’ health care could face more change than most states under the new federal administration, and Dr. Sejal Hathi, director of the state health authority, said officials are preparing to respond quickly as things happen.

Not only that, but the state’s health care system could face more changes than in most states because of several Oregon-specific programs.

Hathi said the agency needs to be ready for anything, but “the reality is we don’t yet know what the next administration is going to bring.”

State officials and others tend to mull different responses to a new administration, she said, ranging between aggressive public “resistance” versus quietly safeguarding the work agencies are doing: “keep your head down. Don’t make noise.”

So far, Gov. Tina Kotek’s public statements suggest she’s charting a course in between. She’s said she’ll fight to preserve “Oregon values” against any partisan “attacks.”

Hathi stressed that it’s Kotek who will determine how Oregon responds to changes over the coming year.

[**Oregon's health care workforce is growing, but serious challenges remain, new report says**](#)

KTVZ | By KTVZ News Sources

The 2025 Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment largely finds Oregon needs more professionals working to meet demand, particularly in rural areas. The report also determined the racial, ethnic and gender makeup of Oregon’s health care workforce doesn’t match the state’s diversity, although the degree to which there are staff shortages and insufficient diversity varies within each profession.

The 2025 assessment describes the many complex challenges faced by the state’s more than 209,000 licensed health care providers, including:

- While Oregon’s health care and social assistance sector increased by more than 15,000 jobs during the past year, it had even more vacancies – 18,800 empty positions – at the same time.
- Health care workers are unevenly distributed, with rural and underserved communities generally having fewer providers than resource-rich urban areas.

The report recommends numerous steps to help Oregon grow and diversify its health care workforce, including:

- Increase training opportunities – especially in rural and underserved areas – and create more pre-college learning pathways for younger students. Increase investment in Oregon’s public and private higher education system to scale up health education programs.
- Increase compensation and other benefits, including offering stipends for housing, childcare, transportation and other barriers to working in health care.

- Reduce administrative burdens that make hiring staff and billing for care challenging.

[Oregon House leader reboots push to limit corporate control of medicine](#)

Portland Tribune | By Jake Thomas

A high-profile effort to curb corporate influence on how physicians provide care will resume in the upcoming Oregon legislative session.

An earlier version of the bill easily passed the state House in 2024 with bipartisan support, but faced challenges in the Senate before leadership [shut down the session early](#).

The first-of-its-kind effort seeks to go beyond what other states do to keep physicians in control of patient care as deep-pocketed corporations and investors rapidly purchase or affiliate with independent practices.

It drew [national attention](#), with [giant corporations](#) like Amazon and UnitedHealth Group joining in the effort to sink it even as national advocacy and physician groups signed on [in support](#).

The lawmakers spearheading the effort is state Rep. Ben Bowman, a Tigard Democrat who was chosen as House majority leader last year. He's currently finalizing the details on a new version of the bill that would relax some of its more exacting restrictions, according to a summary of it issued by his office. Speaking on a panel of the Oregon Health Forum in October, Bowman said he was focused on crafting a bill that could pass. He acknowledged that there are "a lot of people who don't like" his proposal and that they can "pay people to fight it."

INFRASTRUCTURE

[Repairing Oregon's roads and bridges could cost billions. Will lawmakers come up with a fix?](#)

OregonLive | By Sami Edge

The Stark Street Bridge, which crosses the Sandy River east of Troutdale, closed in September after a [supporting wall collapsed](#), rendering it unsafe to cross.

The bridge spans the border of Sen. Chris Gorsek's district, and the Gresham Democrat cites it as a prime example of the real world consequences of the [deferred maintenance](#) that is rampant across Oregon's transportation infrastructure.

As co-chair of Oregon's Joint Committee on Transportation, Gorsek is tasked with helping design a solution to that problem this year. During the 2025 session, Oregon lawmakers are expected to develop a multibillion-dollar transportation package. Unlike past mega-billion transportation allocations from the Legislature, which promised a series of large new infrastructure projects, transportation insiders instead expect the 2025 package largely to finance routine maintenance and operations.

What exactly the transportation package will include, how much it will cost and how exactly lawmakers want Oregonians to pay for it, however, remains unclear with less than a week to go before the start of the 2025 session.

Some Republicans have criticized that ambiguity. But Democrats and transportation committee leaders say they will deliver specifics well ahead of the session's end, still five months away.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

[Kotek allows Port of Morrow to violate water pollution permit](#)

Statesman Journal | By Tracy Loew

Oregon will allow the Port of Morrow to violate its water pollution permit by spreading nitrogen-contaminated wastewater on nearby agricultural fields, despite a drinking water crisis in the area.

Gov. Tina Kotek issued an [executive order](#) Monday declaring a state of emergency in Morrow and Umatilla counties, citing the risk of an economic shutdown if permit conditions aren't waived. The port processes wastewater from a number of agricultural and food processing businesses in the two counties.

Port officials say a wet winter threatens to overwhelm its wastewater storage capacity next month, meaning it would not be able to accept any more wastewater from businesses.

In the summer of 2022, Morrow County declared a state of emergency after testing showed private wells had high nitrate concentrations. The county began providing residents with bottled water.

Kotek's emergency declaration allows the port to dump wastewater on the fields between Wednesday and Feb. 28, a time when it's normally prohibited.

It restricts the dumping to certain fields that are either down-gradient from domestic wells or considered at "low risk" of contaminating drinking water.

[Oregon firefighters and Red Cross volunteers aid California wildfire efforts](#)

KATU

Firefighter strike teams from Oregon continue their efforts in California, focusing on mop-up operations and securing fire perimeters as winds threaten to intensify.

ECONOMY

[Inflation speeds up, ends 2024 at 2.9 percent](#)

The Hill | By Tobias Burns

Inflation picked up speed in December as the U.S. economy showed unexpected signs of strength at the end of 2024.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 0.4 percent in the final month of 2024 and ended the year up 2.9 percent, according to data released Wednesday by the Labor Department.

The new inflation numbers come as the Federal Reserve faces a crossroads with President-elect Trump set to take office Monday.

The Fed ended 2024 with three consecutive rate cuts meant to bring borrowing costs down from two-decade highs. But as the job market rallied and inflation picked up to close out the year, the Fed signaled it would not cut rates as quickly in 2025.

"If interest rates are going to come down, inflation needs to come down. And it's not. The improvement in shelter costs has been slow to materialize and still isn't anything to write home about," Greg McBride, chief financial analyst with Bankrate, wrote in a commentary.

POLITICS

[New Oregon US Rep. Janelle Bynum looks for 'low-hanging fruit' in divided Congress](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julie Shumway

After winning a bruising campaign last fall against incumbent Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Bynum told the Capital Chronicle she's looking for ways to make a difference for Oregon and find the "low-hanging fruit" on which Democrats and Republicans can agree.

"I've always been an optimist and a person that would stare big challenges down, and I think just the success of my legislative career over the last eight years has proven that Number 1, I will always work across the aisle with my Republican colleagues, even when I don't have to," she said. "In this case, I do." Most people, she said, ultimately want the same thing — great schools for their kids, child care and good hospitals and doctors in their communities. She sees opportunities to work with Republicans on maternal health care, as research shows that babies born to healthy mothers are less likely to be

premature or born with health problems and mothers with access to health care are less likely to die in childbirth.

And she hopes Republicans and Democrats can work together to reduce the ferocity of wildfires, like the Santiam Fire that burned a scar across her district in 2020 and all but wiped out the cities of Detroit and Gates. Congress is now sparring over disaster relief for California's ongoing wildfires, with Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Louisiana, pushing for "conditions" on spending.

While she supported Harris and was disappointed in the results of the presidential election, Bynum said she's open to working with Trump. She thinks they both believe in being disruptive because that's how businesses advance and innovate.

[Who's on Salem City Council? Get to know Mayor Julie Hoy, councilors](#)

Statesman Journal | By Whitney Woodworth

Salem City Council has some new faces in 2025. Here's what to know about Mayor Julie Hoy and new and returning city councilors.

[Editorial: Legislators will consider killing the kicker | Opinion](#)

The Bulletin

The kicker is the only-in-Oregon law embedded in the state constitution that can give taxpayers money back. If actual revenue over the Legislature's two-year budget cycle is more than 2% higher than forecast when the budget was adopted, money comes back. The corporate kicker revenue is slightly different. It goes into the general fund for K-12 education. Send your love or your ire for the kicker to former state Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend. He is in large part responsible for the kicker's place in the state constitution.