

## Oregon News

### POLITICS

#### [Oregon lawmakers head to Salem today to start the 2025 legislative session](#)

*OPB*

The start of the 2025 legislative session appears to be kicking off on a relatively harmonious note. Lawmakers face a long list of daunting tasks this session; from passing the next two-year state budget to approving a [multi-billion dollar transportation package](#) to pushing for more accountability from state agencies. There are old wounds not far from the surface; the [2023 legislative walkout](#), the [longest in state history](#), rendered 10 state senators ineligible to seek reelection.

"I think we're trying to find common ground," said Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, who said he's focused on relationship building with his Democratic counterparts, who hold supermajorities in both legislative chambers.

"We're coming with a charm offensive," Bonham said of his party's approach to the session. "We want to get to know you. We want to go out to dinner with you. Ax throwing was mentioned, I think that's a great idea. Maybe some cornhole, who knows?"

Bonham, the Republican leader in the Senate, said he suggested the state tap the general fund, rather than try to raise new taxes. For the governor, it seemed that was a clear non-starter.

"I think the governor gave more time to her high school track career than she did to talking about a transportation package in her [state of the state] speech," he said.

#### [Oregon Legislature gets to work on budget, transportation and other issues](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Democrats now hold three-fifths of seats in both the House and Senate, giving them more flexibility to raise revenue. But they'll face opposition from Republicans if they try to do so. Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, pointed to a [post-election newsletter](#) from Portland Democratic Rep. Rob Nosse that said the supermajority meant Democrats wouldn't be "held hostage" by Republican opposition to raising taxes.

"I'm struggling right now as a member of a minority party that doesn't feel included to want to participate, especially when we have members of the Democrat leadership in the House saying they're interested in going it alone, that they're going to bypass any Republican feedback and pass taxes without us," he said. "That's just an absolute terrible approach to this conversation."

"We still need lots of big apartments," Kotek said. "We're never going to stop building single family standalone homes. We have to have middle housing to fill in the gap, and I think we're just at the cusp of seeing more of this happening because people are getting more comfortable with it. The bill I'm working on will make that easier."

A state workgroup has suggested a slate of recommendations to lawmakers. The Oregon chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, in particular, wants to make it easier for a judge to civilly commit people.

It would make changes like allowing judges to consider prior suicide attempts and other factors, like how likely a person is to harm others within the next 30 days and not immediately.

#### [Eastern Oregon lawmakers ready for 2025 session](#)

*East Oregonian*

Mike McLane, a former state representative and circuit judge from Powell Butte, is entering his first term representing Senate District 30, which includes the entirety of Baker, Crook, Grant, Lake, Harney and Malheur counties as well as parts of Jefferson and Deschutes.

McLane said he felt it would be premature to highlight specific bills he'd like to champion but reiterated an earlier statement that he'd stand up for the rule of law, look for solutions to food insecurity and sound the alarm about what he believes is an impending federal budget reckoning.

McLane also expressed concern over an Oregon Supreme Court ruling that upheld a lower court's decision to prohibit a man from possessing guns after he was convicted of harassment.

In addition, Owens is working with Levy and Todd Nash, the freshman senator from Enterprise, on a measure to raise the threshold for putting ballot initiatives before Oregon voters. He said the process can be abused by out-of-state interests to get things like legalizing drugs on the ballot.

Nash and Levy are collaborating on several other measures as well.

The two are co-sponsoring Senate Bill 761, which would appropriate \$2.5 million from the general fund to the Water Resources Department to implement projects that benefit water demands in the Walla Walla Basin.

Nash and Levy also are among lawmakers co-sponsoring Senate Bill 788, which would allow lands zoned for exclusive farm use to be used for weddings or other events east of the summit of the Cascade Range.

### [Oregon joins other states in two gun rights cases in Texas](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Attorney General Dan Rayfield has joined other states in Texas gun rights cases in support of Biden administration rules requiring background checks and banning conversion devices that turn handguns into rapid-fire weapons.

### [Oregon's Lori Chavez-DeRemer could make history as nation's labor secretary](#)

*KATU*

Oregon's former Republican U.S. Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer could be one of the few Oregonians in history in the president's cabinet, according to political analyst Jim Moore.

### [Defend The Guard Introduced In Oregon](#)

*AntiWar Blog*

A bill that would radically change Oregon's involvement in foreign conflicts has been sponsored by Oregon Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham and freshman Senator Diane Linthicum.

SB 667, also known as "Defend The Guard", is model legislation being proposed simultaneously in several other State governments that would prohibit National Guard troops from being deployed to foreign conflicts unless there is an official declaration of war by the United States Congress.

Recently, the Oregon National Guard has been deployed to active conflict zones such as eastern Syria and the Sinai peninsula. Oregon National guard troops are a critical resource for confronting natural disasters in our State such as floods and wildfires. During the devastating 2020 wildfire season, a lack of National Guard operated Chinook helicopters in our State was a contributing factor to the challenges of that season as many of them were still deployed in the now-defunct mission in Afghanistan.

### **WATCH:** [YVYV: Sitting down with Oregon's Republican and Democrat leaders in Salem](#)

*KATU*

On Tuesday, the Oregon legislature kicks off its 2025 session. KATU's Steve Dunn went to the Oregon capitol this month to ask Democrats and Republicans what they plan to do for you in the session.

### **WATCH:** [Oregon lawmakers to meet in Salem to kick off legislative session](#)

*KATU*

Jan. 21 marks day one of the long legislative session in Oregon. There are many priorities this session, including addressing housing and homelessness.

## **TRUMP IS BACK**

### **A look at President Trump's first full day in the White House**

*Fox News*

On Monday, Donald Trump took the Oath of Office and was sworn in as the 47th President of the United States. He is only the second man in the nation's history to return to the Oval Office after a hiatus. He has promised to "act with historic speed" – and on his first day in office, he signed more than 200 executive orders. This sweeping, initial wave of policy initiatives concentrated on border security, energy, reducing the cost of living for American families, ending DEI programs across the federal government, and more.

**See also:**

- [Trump to meet with GOP Congressional leaders after floor of executive orders | The Wall Street Journal](#)
- [Trump's first day in office: Signing orders, spinning yarns, settling scores | The Wall Street Journal](#)

### **Oregon governor to stand by sanctuary law despite Trump-allied group's warning of 'serious consequences'**

*The Oregonian*

Gov. Tina Kotek said on Friday her administration will continue adhering to Oregon's sanctuary law despite receiving a [letter](#) from a nonprofit allied with President-elect Donald Trump warning of federal prosecution and civil lawsuits for doing so. "I remain focused on delivering results for the issues Oregonians care about most," Kotek said in a statement. "I stand by Oregonians' state-guaranteed protections and civil liberties."

### **Immigrants in Oregon could be significantly impacted by Trump's second term. Here's how**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Oregon is preparing for what could be sweeping changes to its immigration landscape with President-elect Donald Trump poised to retake office on Monday. The state is home to about 120,000 undocumented immigrants, according to [2022 estimates](#) from the Pew Research Center. There are also tens of thousands more people living in Oregon under other designations, including those fleeing violence and persecution, workers who are here on the H-1B visa, or international students enrolled in Oregon universities. The state also has one of the broadest sanctuary laws in the U.S.

[A recent poll](#) found that many Americans consider immigration a higher priority than they did last year, and Trump has promised aggressive immigration enforcement and mass deportations. In Oregon, 18% of voters polled listed immigration as their top issue, according to exit poll data from the Associated Press. Of those who listed it as their top issue in Oregon, 90% voted for Trump.

**See also:**

- [What Trump's immigration policies could mean in Portland | KPTV](#)
- [Will Oregon be punished for being a sanctuary state? | KOIN](#)
- [President Trump's sweeping action on immigration sparks mixed reaction from Oregonians | KGW](#)

### **Oregon governor to stand by sanctuary law despite Trump-allied group's warning of 'serious consequences'**

*Oregon Live*

Gov. Tina Kotek said on Friday her administration will continue adhering to Oregon's sanctuary law despite receiving a [letter](#) from a nonprofit allied with President-elect Donald Trump warning of federal prosecution and civil lawsuits for doing so.

Days before Christmas, the Washington, D.C.-based [America First Legal Foundation](#) sent a letter to Kotek stating the group had "identified your jurisdiction as a sanctuary jurisdiction that is violating federal law," and obstructing immigration law carries "serious consequences."

"Such lawlessness subjects you and your subordinates to significant risk of criminal and civil liability," an attorney for the group, James Rogers, wrote in a [Dec. 23 letter to Kotek posted online](#). "Accordingly, we are sending this letter to put you on notice of this risk and insist that you comply with our nation's laws."

### **[Oregon governor vows to collaborate with Trump administration while upholding state values](#)**

KATU

"Earlier today, Donald Trump was sworn in as President of the United States. I will work with anyone who wants to join our efforts to make real progress for Oregonians..."

"...Now that the dust has settled and Donald Trump is president, it's time to recommit ourselves to working together to build a better future for every person in our state. In every corner of our state, good people are fighting for lower costs, better schools, and more resources to address our state's most pressing issues."

### **[With Trump's inauguration looming, Oregon Democrats strategize response](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Republicans have also dismissed Democratic politicians' stated concerns as political posturing. Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, recalled seeing a press release from Fahey, then the House majority leader, shortly after the Supreme Court overturned the national right to an abortion, reassuring Oregonians that their legislators had protected abortion rights in state statute and they didn't need to fear. But a few months later, as the 2022 election heated up, campaign ads warned that electing Republicans would result in losing those rights and Oregonians should fear.

"We've codified in Oregon the things that Oregonians expect us to have in law and the threat from the federal government is a little bit of just — I don't believe there's a 'there' there," Bonham said.

Bonham has just two years left in the Senate because he and nine other Republicans lost their chance to run for reelection by participating in a six-week walkout in 2023, spurred in large part by their opposition to a bill that sought to expand and protect access to reproductive and gender-affirming care. He'll attend Trump's inauguration on Monday.

"To pretend like somehow the boogeyman of Donald Trump is coming for us, I'm just not sold," Bonham said.

### **[Pacific Northwest voters went against Trump, but many favored him on prominent issues](#)**

*OPB*

On top two listed issues, Oregon voters leaned Trump. This chart shows what issues polled voters ranked as their most important, and how those people voted. For example, 33% of voters chose the economy and jobs as their top issue. And of the people who said that was their top issue, 55% voted Republican.

Percent of voters  
  
 Low High

	Top issues	▼ Ranked first	Voted Democrat	Voted Republican
1	Economy and jobs	33%	42%	55%
2	Immigration	18%	9%	90%
3	Abortion	13%	85%	13%
4	Climate change	11%	92%	4%
5	Health care	10%	76%	19%
6	Crime	4%		
7	Foreign policy	4%		
8	Gun policy	4%		
9	Racism	3%		

### [In Oregon, opinions on President Trump's second inauguration range from despondency to optimism](#)

KGW

In a high-unprecedented political comeback, President Donald Trump was [sworn in for a second nonconsecutive term](#) on Monday, becoming the 47th President of the United States. "The golden age of America begins right now," Trump said in his remarks. "From this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world."

### [Trump keeps TikTok alive in U.S. with executive order to suspend ban](#)

*The Oregonian*

TikTok's app allows users to create and watch short-form videos, and broke new ground by operating with an algorithm that fed viewers recommendations based on their viewing habits. But concerns about its potential to serve as a tool for Beijing to manipulate and spy on Americans pre-date Trump's first presidency...

..."Any company that hosts, distributes, services, or otherwise facilitates communist-controlled TikTok could face hundreds of billions of dollars of ruinous liability under the law, not just from DOJ, but also under securities law, shareholder lawsuits, and state AGs," Cotton noted.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

### [Lawsuit alleges mishandling of funds at state education agency](#)

*The Oregonian*

A former Oregon Department of Education employee hired to manage the implementation of [a 2023 law](#) that makes it harder for school districts to consign high-needs students to less than a full day in school says the agency has mishandled some of the \$3.1 million in state funding tied to the new rules. In a lawsuit filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court Wednesday, Allison Watkins says she repeatedly tried to alert her supervisors that "the funds ... were being mismanaged," because she and her team — who were tasked with helping school districts comply with the new law, set by Senate Bill 819 — were being diverted to other unrelated projects.

### [Oregon DHS needs to stop playing whack-a-mole with vulnerable children](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

For nearly a decade, Oregon's approach to child welfare has amounted to a pathetic game of whack-a-mole. The "solution" to one crisis begets another, while everyone ignores the issue at the root of it all: Oregon tears apart families needlessly at a rate well above the national average. This sick game began in earnest when news accounts exposed horrific abuse at one private agency's group homes. They also revealed that the Oregon Department of Human Services knew about the abuse and did nothing. That investigation whacked the state into raising standards for foster homes. It wound up warehousing foster children in offices and jails.

### [A tough-on-crime approach is back in U.S. state capitols](#)

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Other states have backtracked just years after relaxing sentencing laws. Democratic Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek signed a measure rolling back a 2020 voter-approved law that had made possession of small amounts of hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine only punishable by a ticket and a maximum fine of \$100. A new law that took effect last year makes that a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and imposes harsher penalties for selling drugs near parks and other places.

### [High school construction costs in Portland are headed off the charts. Why?](#)

*The Oregonian*

Portland was planning to spend well over \$400 million apiece [to build three high schools](#), Greene told fellow school board members and superintendents from around the country. Did that price tag raise any eyebrows?

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### [Trump's transportation pick commits to supporting I-5 Bridge funding](#)

*KOIN*

Cantwell later pressed Duffy, asking if he supports the federal funding already committed to the Interstate Bridge project — which aims to provide seismic upgrades to the bridge, which is at risk of collapse in the event of a major earthquake, along with improvements for traffic congestion... "That (is) underway, yes," Duffy said. "One of the complaints I've heard from the committee is oftentimes the money's not moving fast enough. There's been questions about why it's taking so long, so, yes, I'd love to work with you and make sure money gets out the door to the projects that are underway." Questions surrounding Duffy's support of the federal funds come as more than \$2.1 billion in federal funding has been approved for the project, with the most recent funding of [nearly \\$1.5 billion announced in July 2024](#). Another \$600 million for the bridge was announced in December 2023, with part of that funding stemming from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill under the Biden administration.

## **HEALTH**

### [Technicians at Providence's outsources lab seek to unionize](#)

*Willamette Week*

Technicians at a testing laboratory sold nearly two years ago by Providence Health and Services to a North Carolina company have now filed to join the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, a union spokesperson announced Friday.

### [Beyond hard hats: Mental struggles become the deadliest construction industry danger](#)

*Oregon Live*

Frank Wampol had a dark realization when he came across some alarming data a few years ago: More than [5,000 male construction workers](#) die from suicide annually — [five times](#) the number who die from work-related injuries, according to several studies. That's considerably more than the [suicide rate for men](#) in the general population.

Since then, the company has added mental health first-aid training for on-site supervisors and distributed information about suicide prevention to laborers in the field. The efforts are part of a larger push led by the industry and supported by unions, research institutions, and federal agencies to address construction workers' mental health.

But initiatives to combat this mental health crisis are tougher to implement than protocols for hard hats, safety vests, and protective goggles. And some of the potential solutions, such as paid sick leave, have drawn pushback from the industry as it eyes costs.

In addition to high suicide rates, drug use is rampant, especially opioids such as heroin and fentanyl.

A [recent study](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that construction ranks highest in overdose deaths by occupation.

## **ECONOMY & TAXES**

### **Opinion: Don't buy the baloney. Oregon can both lift up workers and get big jobs done**

*The Oregonian / Gov. Tina Kotek*

Opponents of Project Labor Agreements, like The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board and some construction companies, would have you believe that we must choose between a competitive contractor market and a fairly compensated, skilled workforce (["Editorial: Merry Christmas, labor unions! Love, Gov. Kotek,"](#) Jan. 12). Well, I don't buy it. Having a consistent PLA policy for complex state construction projects will enhance how we grow as a state, while attracting and keeping a talented workforce to get the job done right for Oregonians.

### **Oregonians buy cellphones, cars and e-bikes ahead of potential tariffs**

*OPB*

Gregg, who founded the retail and repair shop in 2008, was concerned all those things would shrink his business. "And then November hit," Gregg said while one of his mechanics hoisted an e-bike onto a repair station behind him, "and boom." Since the election, sales are up 25% over his previous forecast.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**

### **Forest owner wants to put burned acreage back into carbon offset market, but critics skeptical**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

A large Oregon forest meant to offset planet warming emissions was burned three years ago in a wildfire, and the project had to be pulled from a carbon credit market that aims to fight against climate change.

### **State lawmakers call for Barred Owl Kill Plan to be reversed**

*Curry Pilot*

A bipartisan group of Oregon state House members and a newly elected state senator is asking the federal government to nix the idea of killing nearly half a million barred owls in the Pacific Northwest. The lawmakers, Representative Ed Diehl (R-Linn and Marion counties), Representative David Gomberg (D-Lincoln and Western Benton/Lane counties), Representative Virgle Osborne, (R-Douglas county) and returning legislator, Senator-elect Bruce Starr, (R-Yamhill and Polk counties) is criticizing the 30-year kill plan, citing its "impracticality and its runaway price tag of \$1.35 billion."

“I cannot believe what a poorly crafted plan the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed,” kgSenator-elect Bruce Starr said. “The agency wrote a 300-page environmental impact statement but didn’t tell us a thing about how much it will cost. We now have information to suggest it’s a budget-buster. The incoming administration needs to put an end to this plan.”