

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **Oregon's 83rd legislative session kicks off with debate on wages, mental health**

*KATU | By Vasili Varlamos*

The Senate Labor and Business Committee was one of the early meetings. The committee shared information and debated a bill that would adopt federal rounding standards for wages, which could mean more money for Oregon workers. Critics say current state law already pays workers for every minute worked and that rounding isn't necessary.

"That's what the law says: You'll pay for every minute you work today in Oregon," said Josh Nasbe, the legislative director for the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham responded, "I guess that's my concern right now. I don't know of any employer that I've worked for that takes to-the-minute pay. So I would imagine that 90-plus percent of Oregon employers are violating the law today."

#### **Oregon Department of Education accused of mismanaging \$3M, wrongful termination in whistleblower lawsuit**

*KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois*

The lawsuit — which was first reported by [The Oregonian](#) — was filed in Multnomah County circuit court January 15 and seeks \$780,000 in damages with whistleblower and discrimination claims.

The lawsuit was filed by Dr. Allison Watkins, who was hired in October 2023 as the director of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act initiatives. Watkins was hired on a \$142,000 annual salary to help implement provisions under [Senate Bill 819](#), which allocated more than \$3.1 million to the Oregon Department of Education.

SB 819, signed into law in 2023, covers abbreviated school day programs for students with disabilities. Among the law's provisions, it states that students with disabilities must have access to the same number of instructional hours as other students in their district.

#### **Oregon Sen. Wyden: 'I know exactly what I'm looking at' with Musk gesture**

*KOIN | By Jashayla Pettigrew*

An Oregon lawmaker has appeared to cry foul over a controversial gesture Elon Musk made on Inauguration Day.

While [presenting a speech](#) to President Donald Trump on Monday, the Tesla founder placed his right hand on his left shoulder before extending the arm out with his palm down.

"The 'everyone is Hitler' attack is sooo tired," Musk said.

"I'm the son of Jewish refugees that fled the Nazis," Wyden wrote. "I know exactly what I'm looking at." Musk will serve as co-head of President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency. Authorities are now investigating an alleged arson at his automotive company's dealership in Salem, [which occurred on Inauguration Day](#).

#### **Oregon lawmakers set legislative agenda with over 2,300 bills introduced on first day**

*KOIN | By Ken Boddie*

Governor Tina Kotek and the legislature's major priority this session is housing and homelessness, specifically getting more affordable housing built.

Other major agenda items this session include education funding, government accountability, mental health and a transportation package that could reach more than \$5 billion.

Two years ago, the legislature passed about 650 bills in the last long session.

Kotek has proposed a \$39.3 billion budget.

### [Without much fanfare, Oregon lawmakers get back to business in Salem](#)

*KGW-TV | By Tim Gordon*

Democrats hold a supermajority in both the Oregon House and Senate this year, handing them substantial power to pass legislation, including the ability to pass new taxes if voting unanimously. But Republicans still have the power to walk out and deny a quorum, scuttling Democrats' ability to pass bills, though [they'd do so at significant cost](#) to their own political careers.

Tuesday's start to the session, however, betrayed few signs of any looming conflicts. There were few ceremonial theatrics to kick things off, let alone partisan fireworks; returning lawmakers exchanged friendly greetings before getting down to business.

"There's always disagreement, of course, as the natural process of being in this building," Jama said. "But I just want to let you know that 90% of the bills that we pass are essentially bipartisan bills ... and so we want to cooperate and work with our colleagues on the Republican side of it."

Boshart Davis said she is all for making progress, as long as the bottom line is considered.

"We have to make sure that we're not asking Oregonians to pay more to get less, and that's something that we saw in the governor's budget," she said. "It's more money, and we're gonna have to ask ourselves, 'Are we getting more for that?'"

### [Murmurs: GOP Operative Targets Vote by Mail](#)

*Willamette Week*

As Republicans nationally celebrate their return to power in Washington D.C., a coterie of Oregon Republicans, led by former two-time legislative candidate Ben Edtl, are pursuing a strategy to chip away at Democrats' dominance in the state, where they hold all statewide offices and supermajorities in both legislative chambers.

In December, Edtl, who is running for chairman of the Oregon Republican Party, and co-chief petitioners Michaela Hammerson and Stephen Joncus filed Initiative Petition 26-037. The initiative would amend the Oregon Constitution to prohibit voting by mail, except for absentee ballots. Although Republicans nationally have railed against vote by mail, Republicans in Oregon vote at a higher rate than Democrats—there are just far fewer of them. The petitioners need to gather 156,321 valid signatures to qualify for the 2026 ballot.

## **TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS**

### [Portland mayor reaffirms city's 'sanctuary' amid Trump's anti-immigration orders](#)

*KOIN | By Jashayla Pettigrew*

According to Wilson, the act would affect at least 108,000 Oregonians.

But the push for stricter immigration policies isn't expected to be enforced on a local level, due to Oregon's status as a sanctuary location.

This policy was maintained with the 2021 passage of the Sanctuary Promise Act. The Oregon Department of Justice also [released](#) a new Sanctuary Promise Community Toolkit late last year. Weeks later, the [board of Portland Public Schools reaffirmed](#) a previous resolution stating that faculty are not required to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

### [Oregon legislature concerned over Trump's executive orders](#)

*Fox News | By Spencer Schacht*

On day one, President Donald Trump signed nearly 50 executive orders. With so many to review, it will take a few days to see which are enforceable and which will face legal challenges.

But one executive order dealing with electric vehicles caught the attention of Oregon's Joint Transportation Committee's Co-Vice Chair.

The executive order is called ["Unleashing American Energy."](#) It rolls back multiple executive orders from the Biden administration addressing climate change and clean energy, but it was specifically written to "Eliminate the electric vehicle (EV) mandate."

Rep. Boshart Davis has served on the Joint Transportation Committee for several years. She opposed the ["Advanced Clean Cars II"](#) rule, which was passed in 2021. That rule requires auto manufacturers in Oregon to make all new passenger cars "Battery electric or plug-in hybrid EVs" by 2035. Rep. Boshart Davis hopes Trump's order might end that rule.

"Those can only exist because they rely on an EPA waiver and if the waivers get rescinded will that apply in states like Oregon, Washington, California New York," Rep. Boshart Davis said, "But that remains to be seen, we are less than 24 hours into it, but it does put question marks on things that were passed in this state."

### [How Oregon is responding to Trump's order ending birthright citizenship](#)

*Statesman Journal* | By Anastasia Mason

The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) with a coalition of immigration groups and several states including Oregon have filed lawsuits challenging President Donald Trump's executive order [ending birthright citizenship](#) for children born in the United States.

Trump's [executive order](#) titled "Protecting the meaning and value of American citizenship" aims to end automatic birthright citizenship.

The Fourteenth Amendment establishes birthright citizenship, meaning any child born in the U.S. is a citizen, regardless of their parent's status.

### [Oregon attorney general, 3 others file lawsuit challenging President Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship](#)

*KTVZ*

Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield announced Tuesday that he and the attorneys general from Arizona, Illinois, and Washington are challenging President Donald Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship, which they claim violates the constitutional rights to which all children born in the U.S. are entitled.

### [Oregon leaders brace for Trump impact on federal lands, which comprise more than half the state](#)

*Oregon Live*

In his first few hours [back in office](#), President Donald Trump issued a flurry of [executive orders](#) aimed at boosting fossil fuels production and mining on federal land and water and rolling back permitting processes and regulations he and his administration find burdensome.

Slightly more than half of all land in Oregon is owned by the federal government — including 60% of Oregon forests — and it's managed primarily by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. The two agencies oversee more than 32 million acres in the state, an area larger than the state of Kentucky, and federal agencies are responsible for funneling hundreds of millions of dollars to the state to manage those areas, including protecting [endangered or threatened species](#).

Examples include ensuring federal Inflation Reduction Act money geared towards climate change investments is received, habitat conservation plans negotiated between state and federal agencies are respected and that the Columbia River Basin Initiative is honored. That initiative, from the Biden administration, provides more than \$1 billion for salmon restoration and clean energy production after 20 years of ongoing lawsuits against the federal government for violating the Endangered Species Act and treaty rights with four Columbia Basin tribes.

To prepare for potential volatility from the incoming administration, Kotek finalized four outstanding reviews with federal agencies in the final weeks of the Biden administration. They cover projects related to solar energy siting, protecting sage grouse territory, managing resources and wildlife protection in southern Oregon's Lakeview District and in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

In 2019, the Oregon Legislature passed [House Bill 2250](#), which requires that the Environmental Quality Department evaluate changes to federal environmental laws and determine whether the changes result in less protective measures than previously established federal standards. If new federal changes undermine established ones, the agency must inform the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission and recommend action to continue enforcing the previous standards.

## HOUSING

### [Tribes and 34 organizations across Oregon, 2 in C.O. receive \\$23 million in grants to support home repairs](#)

*KTVZ*

Oregon Health Authority has awarded \$23 million to repair and rehabilitate homes of low-income residents to eliminate risks to residents' health to the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon and 34 local organizations.

The funds are from the Healthy Homes Grant Program, established to improve health by rehabilitating living environments in Oregon.

### [\\$1.4 million in funding coming to help homeless veterans](#)

*KDVR | By Carlos Murrieta*

Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden made the announcement of \$1,449,067 in funding on Tuesday. As the funding will come from federal housing assistance.

## ENVIRONMENT

### [Power outage leaves more than 35,000 households in southern Oregon in the dark](#)

*Eugene Register-Guard | By Haleigh Kochanski*

Power has been restored to over 35,000 households in southern Oregon on Tuesday after a mysterious power outage.

[Pacific Power](#), a utility company, said the outage affected Glide, Myrtle Creek, Oakland, Roseburg, Sutherlin, Winchester, and Winston customers. There are about 45,000 households in all of Douglas County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

### [Port of Morrow Allowed to Continue Violating Water Pollution Permit](#)

*Food & Water Watch*

Last week, Governor Tina Kotek issued "a state of emergency due to risk of economic shut down," that allows the Port of Morrow to violate its wastewater permit and dump pollution in ways that present massive risk to local drinking water and public health. The Port has long contributed to nitrate contamination in the area by overapplying its wastewater on nearby fields. And now, despite a pending emergency petition under the Safe Drinking Water Act to the U.S. EPA and rollbacks to the permit's environmental protections made – at the Port's behest – within the last three months, the Port will now be allowed to make the problem worse.

The decision to allow increased dumping during the middle of an unusually wet winter further raises the risk of groundwater contamination, as the Port will now be allowed to spread even more untreated industrial wastewater on fields already saturated by rain and snow.

### [Oregon strike teams called to help on new wildfire forcing evacuations in San Diego County](#)

*KTVZ*

Two Oregon strike teams were assigned overnight to a new fire in Southern California. Strike Team 17 (Linn County) and Strike Team 18 (Clackamas County), both made up of water tenders, are working alongside California resources on the Lilac Fire near Bonsall in San Diego County. The fire has prompted evacuations for those living nearby.

In total, the Oregon State Fire Marshal has sent 21 strike teams, 370 firefighters, and 105 apparatus to support California's response to historic wildfires in the southern part of the state. This is the largest out-of-state deployment for the agency.

The sharing of resources is made possible through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. The requesting state pays the local fire agencies directly for all costs.

### [Scientists just found 21 trillion gallons of water north of the Calif. border](#)

*SF GATE*

While studying the volcanic landscape of the Cascade Range north of the California border, Oregon scientists recently discovered something they did not expect: an aquifer containing much more water than previously thought. They estimate its volume of water to be nearly three times the maximum capacity of Lake Mead, the [crucial reservoir](#) that provides water for drinking, irrigation and hydropower to much of the American West.

### [\\$30 Million to go to Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration](#)

*KDVR*

Nearly \$30 million in federal funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is coming to Oregon, to help fund projects around the state.

## **CRIME**

### [A lawsuit alleging excessive force against 2020 protesters in Oregon has been settled, ACLU says](#)

*AP*

The settlement requires the federal government to compensate the individuals who filed the lawsuit for the injuries that federal law enforcement caused them, in exchange for the individuals' agreement to dismiss the lawsuit, according to a news release from the ACLU. No information was released about specific compensation amounts.

The plaintiffs included three military veterans, a college professor, several Black Lives Matter activists and a man who alleges that unidentified agents snatched him off a street for no reason blocks from the federal courthouse.

The lawsuit alleged that federal agents in Portland exceeded the limits of their authority, making illegal arrests and using tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper spray and other tactics to squelch the protests. Almost all of the plaintiffs alleged physical injuries and some were treated at hospitals, the lawsuit said.

A video of plaintiff and Navy veteran [Christopher David's encounter with U.S. agents](#) outside the Portland courthouse circulated widely on social media. It showed one agent hitting David with a baton and another dousing him in the face with pepper spray. David suffered two broken bones in his hand.

### [Oregon couple accused of impersonating firefighters near Palisades Fire](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Isabel Funk*

An Oregon husband and wife were arrested Saturday for allegedly impersonating firefighters near the [Palisades Fire](#) in Los Angeles that has burned more than 23,713 acres and claimed the lives of at least 10 people, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said in a release.

The pair could face charges for impersonating a firefighter and entering an evacuation zone.

The 31-year-old man was convicted of arson, attempted arson and possession of an incendiary device in Marion County for setting an explosion in Woodburn in 2016, according to Oregon court records.

He was sentenced to five years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$30,000 to the city of Woodburn.

### **Woman defrauded hundreds of people adopting pets in Oregon, feds say. She gets prison**

*Sacramento Bee* | By Sara Schilling

An Oregon woman who helped run an animal rescue business conspired to defraud hundreds of pet adopters "by misrepresenting the extent" of the pets' issues, prosecutors said.

Samantha Miller, 55, of Columbia County, also [illegally dispensed](#) prescription animal medication "without a lawful order of a veterinarian," prosecutors said.

Because of that, "victims unknowingly adopted unhealthy and aggressive animals and were forced to seek veterinary care and training, including euthanasia, often incurring significant expenses," prosecutors said.

### **Oregon drivers are frustrated after a popular gas station hid prices and charged double the state average**

*By Barnell Anderson*

Most people know which stations near them have cheap gas prices. This is the case because they become familiar with the signs and perhaps pass by them often. However, according to [KOIN News](#), an ARCO fuel station in Oregon hid its prices from buyers. However, once using the gas station pumps, the [drivers](#) learned that the store was charging far more than they expected.

Specifically, the ARCO station was charging customers \$6.70 per gallon. As for why the drivers feel ripped off, they say this station, which usually has cheap gas prices, had the signs covered up. However, they do admit that the station displayed the prices at the pumps.

### **5 arrested as Portlanders protest inauguration of President Trump**

*Fox News*

Portlanders went to the Battleship Oregon Memorial for "The People's Inauguration Day," a protest where hundreds voiced their frustrations, fears, and anger toward President Donald Trump as he returned to the White House.

Police made at least five arrests for criminal activity during a march in downtown Portland Tuesday night. While the march has concluded, police say they will continue to monitor the area.

Especially when their fight felt more personal after Trump mentioned Portland on Monday during his second inauguration speech, drawing a comparison between Portland protesters and the individuals convicted in the 2021 Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

"They didn't do stuff wrong they didn't do anything wrong. And look what happens in other parts of the country. In Portland, where they kill people and destroy the city, nothing happens to them," said President Trump.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Safe Routes to School projects receive \$3.4 million**

*Bend Bulletin*

The Oregon Transportation Commission approved four Safe Routes to School projects in Central Oregon last week, to the tune of \$3.4 million. The projects focus on ensuring safer travel within a 2-mile radius of schools.

The Oregon Department of Transportation will receive \$1.5 million for a multi-use path along U.S. Highway 97 for M.A. Lynch Elementary students in Redmond. The transportation department will also receive \$990,766 for marked crossings at state Highway 126, also for M.A. Lynch Elementary students.