

Oregon News

POLITICS

Editorial: Democrats tee up a gift for donors at public's expense

The Oregonian Editorial Board

Democrats have taken supermajorities in both chambers of the Legislature and control of all five statewide offices, due in part to millions in donations from labor unions. It seems the spirit of payback – funded with others' money, of course – is running high.

Democratic legislators are pushing a bill that would allow employees who strike to be eligible for unemployment benefits. [Senate Bill 916](#), introduced on behalf of the AFL-CIO and headed for a vote by the full Senate, would allow striking workers at public and private employers to start collecting benefits after two weeks. No other state in the country allows public employees to receive unemployment benefits while on strike – Oregon would be the first.

But the backers assume, wrongly, that it is in employers' interest to prolong a strike. Strikes cost employers a premium in pay for temporary workers and often erode public support. At times, employers may also end up having to provide back pay for the striking workers. There are existing processes to resolve impasses or accusations of unfair practices. These factors all help both sides negotiate in good faith.

The bill, however, would upend that dynamic and put all the power in employees' hands, regardless of whether an employer can meet their demands.

Editorial: Legislators need a math lesson

The Oregonian Editorial Board

Democratic legislators are once again pushing a bill that would [require school districts to bargain over class sizes](#) with teachers unions in contract negotiations. [House Bill 3652](#), they say, only requires school districts to have a conversation about capping class sizes. Under current law, class size is a mandatory subject of bargaining for low-income schools receiving targeted Title 1 federal funding.

But legislators are conveniently ignoring the financial and physical constraints on school districts that effectively turn such a "conversation" into a one-way narrative. This bill, pushed by the teachers union, will result in school districts having to pay out more money, teachers gaining new authority to strike and students, as usual, on the losing end of the equation.

Typically, the solution is for the school district to pay extra to teachers when the size of a class exceeds a certain cap. Because labor costs are 80% or more of a school district's spending, the answer to balancing the budget is cutting opportunities and school days for students.

Capital Chatter: A visit to Peter Courtney's hometown

Oregon Capital Insider | By Dick Hughes

The late Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, made Oregon his adopted home but his formative years were in Charleston. Following the directions from our newfound friends, my wife and I headed toward Magazine Hollow.

Foreign-trained physicians may have easier path to medical licensing under proposals in several states, including Oregon

Oregon Live | By Arielle Zionts

A growing number of states have made it easier for doctors who trained in other countries to get medical licenses, a shift supporters say could ease physician shortages in rural areas.

The changes involve residency programs — the supervised, hands-on training experience that doctors must complete after graduating medical school. Until recently, every state required physicians who completed a residency or similar training abroad to repeat the process in the U.S. before obtaining a full medical license.

[A bill in the Oregon Legislature](#) would establish a limited license to practice medicine for applicants who have passed certain exams and have been certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates.

About 26% of doctors who practice in the U.S. were born elsewhere, according to the [Migration Policy Institute](#). They need federal visas to live in the U.S., plus state licenses to practice medicine.

[Deadliest phase of fentanyl crisis eases, as all states see recovery](#)

OPB | By Brian Mann

[A new analysis of U.S. overdose data](#) conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill also found the decline in deaths began much earlier than once understood, suggesting improvements may be sustainable.

Dasgupta's team found deaths linked to fentanyl and other street drugs have already plunged in many states to levels not seen since 2020. That's when the spread of fentanyl and the Covid pandemic dealt a one-two punch, triggering a catastrophic surge of fatal overdoses.

"From fentanyl it's a 30.6 percent [drop in deaths] in one year, that's a huge reduction," Volkow said. "It's very, very exciting to see."

Oregon has seen a 19% drop from its peak month of overdose deaths in January 2024.

[Oregon Republicans urge Trump to mandate voter ID, citizenship checks](#)

KATU | By Sana Aljobory

A group of Republican lawmakers from the Oregon State Legislature is urging President Donald Trump to issue an executive order mandating voter ID and citizenship verification for voter registrations across the United States. The lawmakers cited significant election integrity concerns in Oregon as the impetus for their request.

A proposed legislation known as the [Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act](#) is making its way through congress. It aims to prevent noncitizens from voting in federal elections by requiring proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote.

House Republican Leader Christine Drazen called for reforms to Oregon's automatic voter registration program following a failure last fall where over 1,500 people were improperly registered to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Drazen urged the Secretary of State to take over the program from ODOT, citing a \$1.1 billion budget error and questioning ODOT's ability to manage election integrity.

[Oregon volunteers helped taxpayers get \\$18 million in refunds last year](#)

OPB | By Lillian Karabaic

This national initiative, operated in Oregon by [Cash Oregon of Metropolitan Family Services](#), provides free tax preparation services to moderate-income households. In 2024, Cash Oregon volunteers completed over 9,100 tax returns, resulting in \$18 million in refunds for taxpayers.

About one-third of Cash Oregon's clients are "limited English proficiency" and they're always looking for bilingual volunteers to help communicate with clients. If they don't have a volunteer who shares the taxpayer's language, there's access to a bank of translators through their partner [Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization](#).

The IRS has always stated they don't share taxpayer data with immigration authorities. [But there's increasing uncertainty if it will remain that way under the new administration](#). That has caused wariness for some long-term volunteers.

[BPA announces intention to split with California and join new Southwest energy market](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

The nonprofit federal administration that provides one-third of the Northwest's electricity is preparing to part ways with its current Western energy market and sell its excess energy to companies and electric cooperatives as far away as Louisiana.

Bonneville Power Administration officials announced in a [draft policy proposal](#) released Wednesday that they intend to leave the California-controlled “real-time” market they’ve participated in since 2022 and join a new “day-ahead” energy market based out of Little Rock, Arkansas.

The move sparked concern and criticism from public utility commissioners and lawmakers in Oregon and Washington, as well as large investor-owned utilities in the region who say it will drive up rates for their millions of customers and cause grid reliability issues.

With BPA out, the pool of energy that Western utilities can purchase from would be smaller and from potentially more expensive sources. It would also delay a long-awaited dream of creating a truly regionally integrated Western grid that could help states collectively manage big transmission issues, boost clean energy generation and address safety issues, lawmakers said.

[Listen: Oregon Rep. Maxine Dexter discusses federal cuts, pushback from fellow Democrats](#)

KATU

Oregon Congresswoman Maxine Dexter, who represents District Three – including Portland, was one of the members who walked out of President Donald Trump’s address on Monday night.

[Listen: Oregon’s dairy cows are free of avian flu. The state is trying to keep it that way](#)

OPB | By Geoff Norcross

Of the 54 known cases of H5N1 virus infection in Oregon right now, most are birds. Some are cats. One is a human. None are dairy cattle, at least not yet.

[Some Oregon cities see ‘middle housing’ surge, but rollout is uneven](#)

Oregon Live | By Jonathan Bach

Portland [has built hundreds of homes](#) that fall into the “middle housing” category — two- to four-unit buildings, as well as townhouses like Stahl’s. A 2019 state law legalized those kinds of homes in zones once exclusively set aside for single-family neighborhoods.

They now account for a sizable share of new home construction in Portland — about 17% of all homes permitted in the city in 2022 and 2023 — particularly as a [drought of investment](#) has slashed apartment construction.

But even as Portland more than doubled its production of middle housing, from an average of 298 annually to 777, more than half the cities surveyed saw middle housing production slip or stall.

[Oregon Tesla dealership shot at; damaged by gunfire, shattered glass](#)

USA Today

Police in Oregon are working with the FBI after gunshots were discovered at a Tesla dealership Thursday morning in the latest instance of vandalism against the carmaker.

Investigators think “at least seven shots were fired” at the building, resulting in hitting three cars total and a computer monitor, according to the [Tigard Police Department](#), located just south of Portland.

[Commentary: Readers Respond to Unemployment Benefits for Striking Teachers](#)

Willamette Week

OEA also stated that SB 916 is not an attempt to normalize strikes. This bill aims to give teachers “their full voice in achieving fair wages” by removing the financial burden of going on strike. Last November, the Portland Teachers strike lasted nearly a month. If SB 916 passes, how long will teacher strikes last? Teachers deserve fair wages and working conditions, and unions are an important part of that effort. But unless there is a clause in SB 916 that holds leadership accountable for the false claims that lead their members into a strike, it would be irresponsible to pass this bill.

[Oregon seeks public input on proposed Hayden Island land sale for I-5 bridge mitigation](#)

KATU

The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) is inviting public comments on a proposed sale of state-owned [land](#) on the south shore of the western side of Hayden Island in Multnomah County.

The Interstate Bridge Group, through the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), has applied to purchase the land to fulfill compensatory mitigation requirements related to the construction of the I-5

bridge over the Columbia River. The land, once acquired, is to be preserved in its natural state to mitigate the environmental impact of the new bridge. ODOT will manage the land for this purpose indefinitely.

[Portland Street Response expands to offer more support for mental health crises](#)

KATU

The city program, which dispatches unarmed response teams during non-life-threatening situations, will now have the ability to transport at-risk individuals to critical services and resources, enter certain public places, and collaborate with police officers and firefighters at emergencies.

[Oregon State Senator James Manning on potential for Ukraine sister state](#)

KOIN

Sen. Manning is also supporting Oregon's distribution of federal grants to help Ukrainian refugees in Oregon who have fled the war-torn country.

[Oregon lawmakers consider bill to boost child care provider support](#)

KATU

The initiative seeks to bolster child care providers by addressing the challenges of accessibility and affordability in the state. The bill's primary objective is to attract new child care providers while sustaining existing ones by reducing financial barriers. Proposed incentives include loan repayment assistance, housing support stipends, and scholarships for students in early childhood development. "60% of childcare providers are operating below their licensed capacity due to workforce shortages," said **Senator Dick Anderson (R)**, a chief sponsor of this bill.

These measures are designed to alleviate economic burdens and make operating child care centers more viable. Sen. Anderson said that childcare workers all over the state are dealing with low wages in a high-stress work environment.

"I have seen firsthand the implications of this strain of low income to lead to high turnover and low retention in this field," said Sen. Anderson. "We need to recognize that childcare providers need financial support and resources to stay in business, improve the quality of care, and ultimately meet the growing demand for childcare in our state."

[Oregon Supreme Court rules on farmland replacement dwellings](#)

Capital Press

The Oregon Supreme Court has ruled that dwellings on farmland can only be replaced if they were subject to property taxes within the past five years.

The ruling reverses the current interpretation of Oregon's replacement dwelling statute, which doesn't impose such a limit on demolished homes.

At the root of the controversy is a confusing provision of land use law that was inconsistently interpreted by legal authorities, ultimately landing before the state Supreme Court.

[Commentary: Medicaid reimbursement rates may be best tool to ensure dental care access in Oregon](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Aaron Patnode

Nationwide, Medicaid pays significantly less than commercial dental insurance. And [Oregon providers say](#) that reimbursement from ALL carriers has not kept pace with the cost of doing business. Specifically, in the [Evaluation of Oregon Health Plan Dental Provider Enrollment](#) study from October 2024, researchers from the Oregon Clinical & Translational Research Institute noted:

Right now, our state legislators are in session and they are in a position to help with this challenging situation. The newly proposed House bill 2957, sponsored by Representatives Javadi, Nosse and Pham, uses a data-based approach to reimbursing dental care providers, creating a better and more appealing payment mechanism to specifically address the issue.

[Poll finds support for stable or increased Medicaid funding, including among Trump voters](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Jennifer Shutt

The results show there is a majority of support for the program among Republicans, including those who supported President Donald Trump. But it also showed that Americans might support changes to [how Medicaid is run](#).

A total of 82% of those polled said that Congress should keep spending on Medicaid about the same or increase it. While the support was highest among Democrats and independents, 67% of Republicans polled said they believe government funding for the program should stay about the same or increase. An overwhelming number of those polled, 96%, said Medicaid is important to their community. Ninety-five percent of Trump supporters responded that Medicaid is either very important or somewhat important.

[Oregon gun control legislation among barrage of bills in 2025](#)

Statesman Journal | By Capi Lynn

Gun control vs. gun rights continues to be a hot-button issue in Oregon, with more than two dozen bills relating to firearms introduced this legislative session.

None have yet to gain serious traction for a combination of reasons. A barrage of bills is clogging the system, Measure 114 is facing ongoing court challenges, and the state has already reformed several gun laws in recent years.

[Preschool for All Takes Input From Providers](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

Multnomah County's Preschool for All program will establish a preschool provider advisory committee this year, with applications opening sometime this spring.

The committee will include 10 to 15 members who operate schools participating in the county's universal preschool program, county spokeswoman Julie Sullivan-Springhetti says. The group will focus primarily on policy development and refinement, including advising the county on requirements and expectations for providers.

Its formation comes as the county relies on folding about 7,000 private preschool slots into the program to meet its goal of enrolling 11,000 preschoolers by 2030.

[Oregonians making \\$1 million: The number has tripled since 2010](#)

Oregon Live | By Mike Rogoway

The state has nearly 6,500 tax filers who report annual income above \$1 million.

That works out to approximately 1 in every 300 Oregon tax returns, according to the latest IRS data from 2022. The number of million-dollar tax returns (joint and single) has tripled since 2010.

[Topsy-turvy trade war has Oregon wineries out in the Canadian cold](#)

Oregon Live | By Michael Alberty

On March 4, the United States announced a 25% tariff on almost all goods entering the country from Canada and Mexico. On March 6, President Donald Trump granted temporary tariff exemptions until April 2 for Canadian and Mexican goods covered by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Despite Trump's pause announcement, the Canadian government maintains its 25% tariff on American goods, including wine. The provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia retaliated further by having their liquor control boards remove all American-produced alcohol from their store shelves.

[Nonprofit Oregon avalanche centers relatively insulated from federal chaos](#)

OPB | By Kathryn Styer Martinez

In Oregon, two of the three avalanche centers that provide public information about avalanche danger are nonprofits. The Wallowa Avalanche Center and the Central Oregon Avalanche Center, or COAC, deal with challenges to raising enough money, but they are somewhat insulated from the chaos of the mass federal firings.

[Trump declared English the official language of the US. Now what?](#)

Wire Reports

Trump's order means the government and organizations that receive federal funding are no longer required to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.

[Trump isn't alone in his geopolitical aspirations. Some in Illinois and Oregon want change too](#)

Associated Press

As [President Donald Trump](#) floats grand ideas like reacquiring the [Panama Canal](#) and taking over [Greenland](#), some rural residents of Illinois and Oregon are promoting geopolitical change of their own: They want to break away from their states, and perhaps unite with Indiana and Idaho. Proponents say they have more in common with their rural brethren across state lines than they do with urbanites in Chicago and Portland, Oregon. And they contend the Democratic-led cities have so much clout in state government that rural, Republican voices get drowned out.