

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **Oregon Court of Appeals says voter-approved firearms measure is constitutional**

*OPB | By Conrad Wilson, Michelle Wiley*

In ruling Wednesday, the Oregon Court of Appeals approved a measure that would further regulate the purchase of firearms and ammunition across the state.

The opinion finds Ballot Measure 114 is constitutional. This overturns a 2023 decision from an Eastern Oregon judge who found it violated Oregon law.

Ballot Measure 114 bans purchases of magazines that can hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. It also requires a permit before purchasing a firearm.

That ruling was appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, but has been on hold while considering a similar law out of California. That statute, which deals with large capacity magazines, will likely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The high court's decision will likely have implications for Oregon's law.

#### **Oregon gun control Measure 114 declared constitutional in major reversal by appeals court**

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

The Oregon Court of Appeals on Wednesday found that Oregon's voter-approved gun control [Measure 114](#) is constitutional in a major reversal overturning a Harney County judge's ruling that has kept the measure on hold for more than two years.

The court evaluated whether the people of Oregon enacted a "reasonable regulation" governing the possession and use of constitutionally protected arms in order to promote public safety without "duly frustrating" the right to armed self-defense. In doing so, it said it largely discarded "the record developed" or the "findings of fact" that the Harney County judge made, and focused on the text of the measure.

Further, it found that the restriction barring large-capacity magazines is "not a restriction of the mere possession of operable firearms themselves," but a contemporary response to public safety concerns "stemming from the advancements in technology and the availability of those advancements to the public" that have created threats to public safety."

A bill currently before state lawmakers, House Bill 3075, that was introduced by Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, sets out procedures to carry out Measure 114 and requires state police to complete criminal background checks before guns are sold or transferred to a permit holder, starting July 1, 2026.

#### **St. Helens indefinitely pauses sex abuse report**

*KATU | Joelle Jones*

A highly anticipated investigative report into allegations of sexual abuse within the St. Helens School District is now on pause indefinitely.

Despite initially stating the findings would be made public within 60 days, on January 31, 2025 a spokesperson for the district explained results would be delayed by two-to-three weeks.

"After the start of the investigative report, the district received litigation claims, and thus, we are unable to release the report," wrote Acting Superintendent Dr. Karen Gray in an email Monday. "The report needs to remain attorney-client privileged for now."

"While Oregon law requires that our clients who are victims submit such notices, there's nothing in the statute or Oregon law that prevents the district from releasing the type of report that they've been talking about," He added. "That's not required. That's a choice by the district."

However, parents told KOIN 6 News they wished the district would prioritize protecting students over protecting the district's interests.

#### **Oregon lawmakers target plastic utensils, condiments, hotel toiletries with updated bag ban**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway*

Since the Oregon Legislature voted to ban single-use plastic grocery bags and limit plastic straws in 2019, most Oregonians have grown used to bringing their own bags to the store and asking for straws. Now, lawmakers looking to stop plastic from piling up on the state's beaches are turning their attention to other plastic utensils, condiment packaging and hotel-issued toiletries. The Oregon Senate voted 22-8 on Tuesday to pass [Senate Bill 551](#), which would expand the state's plastic bag ban to cover takeout bags provided by restaurants and the thicker plastic bags some stores have offered since the original ban took effect in 2020.

The proposal won support from all Democrats and four Republicans. Three of those Republicans — **Sens. David Brock Smith of Port Orford, Dick Anderson of Lincoln City and Suzanne Weber of Tillamook** — represent coastal districts, and Brock Smith said his experience on Oregon's beaches contributed to his vote for the bill.

"I can't go to Port Orford and walk the beach — as I love to do, because everything's better at the beach — and not find plastic on my beaches," **Brock Smith** said. "I go up the rivers and there's beautiful and amazing camping sites that are free to stay at, and it's littered with plastic bags, plastic silverware. I have found the small shampoo and conditioners and soaps in the past, and frankly, that needs to change." He added that the fishing, pulp and paper industries, all prominent in his district, will support removing plastic because cleaner water helps fish and the paper industry wants to produce more recyclable paper bags and wrapping that can be used instead of plastic.

**Sen. Todd Nash, R-Enterprise**, lives far from the ocean but said he voted for the bill because of the timber industry.

Other Republicans were less convinced. **Sen. Kim Thatcher, a Keizer Republican** who voted against the bill, said her dogs would look forward to it because they'd have easier access to saucy Chinese takeout that leaks out of folding boxes and can now be contained by a plastic bag.

**And Sen. Noah Robinson, R-Cave Junction**, said he opposes littering but loves plastic. Stores, restaurants and hotels should have the freedom to choose the products they think are best for their customers, he said. "Banning the plastic that is on those beaches is not the solution. It's just teaching people better practices and trying to control littering," he said.

#### [Oregon Senate passes bill to ban single-use checkout bags statewide](#)

*KATU | By Vasili Varlamos*

Sollman said that water testing done in Oregon found that over 30 waterways within Oregon showed signs of microplastics. The senator believes that this bill will help mitigate the plastics going into our waterways. Sollman added that the bill would be good for both the environment and for businesses in Oregon.

One Republican senator spoke against the bill on the Senate floor. **Sen. Noah Robinson** said that the bill strips both people and businesses of their right to choose.

"I think you just have to look at this from a freedom issue, restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, they should have the right to use the materials that they think are best for their customers," said Robinson.

#### [Plastic bag ban moves to Oregon House of Representatives](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason*

Only about 9% of plastic nationally is recycled, Celeste Meiffren-Swango, director for Environment Oregon, told the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment in January. Sollman is the committee's chair.

"We have serious problems with plastics that run onto our beaches," said vice-chair of the committee, **Sen. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford**.

He and **Sen. Todd Nash, R-Enterprise**, said the bill would help the timber industry by increasing demand for paper bags.

**Sen. Noah Robinson, R-Cave Junction**, spoke against the bill, saying, "I love plastic." He said the ban is a "freedom issue" and would inconvenience consumers.

Robinson was one of eight no votes on the bill, all Republican.

#### [PPS Superintendent responds to Kotek's call for accountability in school funds](#)

*KATU | By Christina Giardinelli*

Portland Public Schools (PPS) Superintendent Kimberlee Armstrong said she welcomes added scrutiny about how hers and other school districts are spending tax dollars, but believes calls for improved student outcomes should be backed by significant financial investments.

Armstrong noted that with budget cuts, the school would need to remove extra supports such as direct assistance for students with higher needs which would likely result in continued poor outcomes for students.

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Kotek has said that she will not explore--during this legislative session--a change to the school funding formula to better account for students with disabilities.

#### [The governor wants more accountability for schools. Some education advocates quibble with the details](#)

*Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman*

Armstrong said that without significantly more money to stave off [cuts](#) to school staffers like librarians and reading specialists, meeting ambitious growth targets would be an even taller order.

In testimony to the House Education Committee on Monday, education advocates lined up to say they supported the bill's overarching goals, then picked apart the details.

#### [Portland Public Schools Angles for State Dollars](#)

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

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#### [PPS to Gov. Tina Kotek: 'We need to fully fund classrooms'](#)

*KOIN | By Lisa Balick*

Facing a \$40 million budget shortfall for year, the Portland Public Schools Superintendent Kimberlee Armstrong is tentatively planning to propose a [budget that cuts more than 200 positions](#).

Among those proposed cuts are interventionists — staffers who give extra help to students who have fallen behind. PPS is tentatively planning to slash 20 interventionists.

#### [Lawmakers Want Property Owners and General Contractors to Take Responsibility for Construction Wage Theft](#)

*Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss*

SB 426 aims to hold both property owners and general construction contractors jointly and severally liable for unpaid wages. The bill would allow workers who have been stiffed—or the Oregon Department of Justice on their behalf—to sue the general contractor or the owner of a project, rather than just a subcontractor who might have hired them.

Prozanski has five co-sponsors and backing from a host of labor organizations, including Carpenters Locals 541 and 503, the Oregon & Southern Idaho District Council of Laborers, and the AFL-CIO of Oregon, as well as the Oregon Center for Public Policy and many social justice organizations. Proponents say it's time to shift the balance of power.

It's scheduled for a work session in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 12.

#### [Commentary: Oregon's revenue surge can produce a false sense of abundance](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Tim Nesbitt*

Oregon may be near the bottom of all 50 states in some troubling categories, such as [K-12 test scores](#) and [children's mental health care](#). But it looks like we'll be Number One when it comes to how much more revenue state government will have to spend in its next budget period.

Oregon's state economist delivered another [blockbuster revenue forecast](#) in late February, projecting an increase in General Fund revenues of 29% in the next two-year budget period. This will give lawmakers a total of \$8 billion in new money to spend above the nearly \$28 billion that supports existing programs. Because of that kicker-induced, artificially-low revenue level in the current budget, it might look like the state is enjoying a revenue surge that can sustain higher levels of spending going forward. But the reality is that most of the new revenue forecasted for the next budget period is catch-up money from earlier gains in household incomes. Some \$5 billion of the \$8 billion is due to revenues from personal incomes that rose to record levels in the past four years but was siphoned off in last year's kicker.

#### [Oregon wildfire bills offer some financial protections to utility companies](#)

*OPB | By April Ehrlich*

Oregon lawmakers are considering a legislative package that would provide some protection to utility companies whose equipment sparks wildfires.

[House Bill 3917](#), introduced Tuesday by Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, would create a fund to help people who lose homes or businesses to utility-caused wildfires — as long as they agree not to sue utility companies for that damage.

The wildfire assistance fund created by HB 3917 would be seeded by utility companies that are regulated by the state's Public Utility Commission, including Pacific Power and Portland General Electric. Half of their seed contribution could come from ratepayer dollars, and the other half would come from the share of rates designated for profits.

No public comments had been submitted in response to HB 3917 in the hours right after the wildfire assistance fund was proposed on Tuesday, but many attorneys who have represented wildfire victims in cases against utility companies have taken issue with portions of its companion bill.

They say HB 3666 gives trillion-dollar private companies like Berkshire Hathaway, which owns PacifiCorp, immunity against lawsuits, because these companies could argue that they did what they reasonably could to prevent their equipment from starting a fire if they get a safety certificate from the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

#### [Citizens concerned about wildfire hazard maps packed White City meeting Saturday](#)

*Ashland News*

Those in attendance voiced concerns about everything from inaccurately rated properties and insurance hikes to limitations on how their properties could be used or modified. A related bill, Senate Bill 678, would repeal the maps, but those in attendance had mixed reviews over whether SB678, which would reverse provisions created by SB 762, was the best solution.

Robinson, co-sponsor of SB678, urged those in attendance to file appeals against wildfire maps on the ODF website by Monday. Robinson said he worried for property owners who could be forced off their properties due to rising insurance and fire-hardening costs.

#### [Pacific Power outlines wildfire season preparations amid legal settlements](#)

*KATU*

Pacific Power has announced its latest efforts to prepare for the upcoming wildfire season, which include pruning thousands of trees and clearing areas around power poles.

The utility company reported that it has inspected over 116,000 transmission facilities, rebuilt 83 miles of overhead lines, and replaced more than 9,000 fuses.

These measures come in the wake of a \$178 million settlement with more than 400 individuals affected by the 2020 Labor Day fires.

#### [NW Natural residential customers could see a nearly 7% rate hike later this year](#)

*OPB | By Monica Samayoa*

Residential customers with Oregon's largest natural gas utility could see a nearly 7% increase on their bills later this year.

NW Natural, which serves more than 2.5 million people in Oregon and Southwest Washington, is [proposing a residential rate increase of 6.8%](#) starting on Nov. 1.

#### [\*\*Salem and Mid-Valley levies and bonds for May 20 election\*\*](#)

*Statesman Journal* | By Bill Poehler

The ballot will be crowded in the May 20 election with local governments asking voters to raise taxes in Marion and Polk County.

Voters in Salem will decide on a [livability levy that would fund operations of the](#) Salem Public Library, Center 50+ and parks for five years.

The Salem-based Chemeketa Community College is putting [a \\$140 million bond to voters](#).

#### [\*\*Missing Oregon 2-year-old Dane Paulsen's body found in Siletz River\*\*](#)

*Statesman Journal* | By Isabel Funk

The body of a [2-year-old who went missing on March 1](#) was found in the Siletz River Tuesday morning, the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office said.

#### [\*\*Portland General Electric Gets Approval to Chop Trees in Forest Park\*\*](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Anthony Effinger

A hearings officer for the city of Portland has approved Portland General Electric's plan to upgrade transmission lines at the northern end of Forest Park, a project that will require cutting down 376 trees and filling two wetlands in an area that's home to the northern red-legged frog, an at-risk species.

#### [\*\*Clark County transit punts on decision about Interstate Bridge light rail funding\*\*](#)

*OPB* | By Erik Neumann

After hours of public comments and weeks of community meetings around Clark County, C-TRAN board members pushed pause at the last minute on a Tuesday vote about funding for future light rail expansion across the Interstate Bridge from Portland to Vancouver.

#### [\*\*Doctors Pressure Regulators to Close OHSU's Primate Research Center\*\*](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Anthony Effinger

A national medical ethics group is pressuring regulators to shutter Oregon Health & Science University's primate research center as a condition for approving OHSU's purchase of rival Legacy Health.

Research on animals at OHSU and elsewhere has led to vaccines for COVID-19, polio, smallpox, mumps and measles, she adds, and to new treatments for infertility, heart disease and diabetes.

#### [\*\*Environmental organization sues Cannon Beach, citing long-standing poop problem\*\*](#)

*KOIN* | By Jashayla Pettigrew

The [Northwest Environmental Defense Center filed its lawsuit](#) against the City of Cannon Beach in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon on Monday. The organization is accusing the beach town of violating the federal Clean Water Act, which prohibits pollutants like human waste and bacteria from being discharged into bodies of water.

"The City's sewer system is aging and in poor physical condition, and the City's past and ongoing failure to properly manage and repair it has caused significant leaking and discharges of untreated waste (including human fecal wastes) onto public beaches and into nearby surface waters, including the Pacific Ocean," Wild and Scenic Law Center's Jamie Saul wrote in the complaint.

#### [\*\*In the face of deep budget cuts, Portland officials hope to maintain homeless services\*\*](#)

*Oregon Live* | By Lillian Hughes

City of Portland officials presented a [\\$97 million budget proposal](#) Tuesday for its homelessness services department, called Portland Solutions, that would maintain the bulk of the city's homeless programming.

#### [\*\*Officials pitch 33% hike in fees for health inspections at restaurants, food carts in Multnomah County\*\*](#)

*Oregon Live* | By Austin De Dios

When the COVID-19 pandemic [hit in 2020](#), Multnomah County officials paused fee increases for required health inspections at restaurants, food carts and the like to help small businesses weather the storm. But now officials, citing a [budget bind](#), are starting to look at ways to generate more income for the inspections program.

To that end, the county may increase inspection fees by as much as 33%, health officials told the Board of Commissioners Tuesday. That would apply to health inspections for restaurants, food cart pods, hotels and spas starting in 2026.

#### **[Controversial ex-commissioner wants vacated seat on Clackamas County board](#)**

*Oregon Live* | By Noelle Crombie

Mark Shull, the one-term Clackamas County commissioner who [lost his reelection bid last fall](#), said Tuesday he intends to apply for his old job now that [Melissa Fireside](#) has [resigned amid felony theft allegations](#).

#### **[Two Graphs Show Why the County Needs Lobbying Rules](#)**

*Willamette Week* | By Anthony Effinger

On March 10, the duo debuted a draft ordinance describing registration and reporting rules for people seeking the ear of county leaders. It would require individuals and entities that spend more than five hours lobbying in a given quarter to report their activities. Consistent with state law, the draft ordinance requires that any gifts or lobbying expenses that exceed \$50 be reported quarterly as well. If passed, the lobbying rules would bring Multnomah County up to speed with the city of Portland and the Metro regional government. The proposed reform arrived 12 days after *WW* examined the absence of such regulations at the county (["Nothing to See Here," Feb. 26](#)).

#### **TARIFFS & FEDERAL CUTS**

#### **[Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs take effect as Canada, Europe announce retaliatory measures](#)**

*Associated Press*

President Donald Trump officially increased [tariffs](#) on all steel and aluminum imports to 25% on Wednesday, promising that the taxes would help create U.S. factory jobs at a time when his seesawing tariff threats are [jolting the stock market](#) and raising fears of an economic slowdown.

#### **[Trump's policies are destabilizing mental health care for veterans, sources say](#)**

*OPB* | By Katia Riddle

In the wake of [federal firings](#) and executive orders, providers and patients at the Department of Veterans Affairs say mental health and mental health care are suffering.

They fear this struggle will get worse as the VA carries through with 80,000 [promised job cuts](#). The agency is one of the largest providers of mental health care in the country.

#### **[Tariff threats could spook investment among Oregon companies](#)**

*OPB* | By Kyra Buckley

In 2024, Oregon imported \$3.8 billion worth of goods and parts from Canada, and exported \$3.3 billion, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division, accessed through [wisertrade.org](#).

The same year, the state imported just \$840 million from Mexico. However, at \$6.3 billion worth of goods, materials and resources, Oregon exported more to Mexico than to any other country.

This week, President Trump's import tax targets are steel and aluminum, both used in Oregon industries ranging from semiconductors to craft brewing. Federal trade numbers show Oregon imported more than \$300 million worth of steel, iron and aluminum last year, mostly [from Canada](#).

#### **[U.S. Education Department to cut hundreds of staff members](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle* | By Shauneen Miranda

he U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday said it's cutting a substantial number of the agency's staff through a "[reduction in force](#)" process, bringing the department's workforce to roughly half the number in place when President Donald Trump took office.

When Trump took office, the department had 4,133 employees. Following Tuesday's announcement, the agency said it will have roughly 2,183 workers remaining. In the past several weeks, nearly 600 workers took voluntary resignation opportunities or retirement, according to a [Tuesday evening press release](#).

[\*\*The US agency that monitors weather will cut another 1,000 jobs, AP sources say\*\*](#)

*OPB*

The Trump administration is starting another round of job cuts — this one more than 1,000 — at the nation's weather, ocean and fisheries agency, four people familiar with the matter tell The Associated Press.

[\*\*Listen: What do federal cuts mean for Oregon's public lands and outdoor rec?\*\*](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Zach Urness*

In this episode of the [Explore Oregon Podcast](#), [host Zach Urness](#) talks about what [federal jobs cuts](#) could mean for Oregon's public lands — including impacts on camping, hiking and rafting.

[\*\*DOGE latest: Oregon schools could see 'disruptions' after education dept firings\*\*](#)

*KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois*

Amid the Trump Administration's efforts to slash the federal workforce, the Oregon Department of Education is warning that Oregon schools could be impacted after plans were unveiled on Tuesday to slash jobs under the U.S. Department of Education.