

## **Oregon News**

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Editorial: Accountability proposal outlines needed first steps to reverse K-12's slide**

*Oregonian Editorial Board*

Through [House Bill 2009](#) and its companion, [Senate Bill 141](#), Kotek is calling for a suite of changes designed to better track student performance and increase scrutiny of school districts. The legislation would add attendance rates for kindergarteners through second graders as well as eighth-grade math proficiency to the list of metrics that districts must report. Her proposals would require students to take “interim assessments,” enabling progress checks during the year that can inform teaching adjustments. This new effort signals a recognition that the success of her term depends on reversing Oregon’s downward slide, stemming enrollment declines and restoring faith in public education.

By requiring districts to track attendance for young students as well as eighth grade math proficiency, Kotek’s legislation would help steer more attention to Oregon’s severe chronic absenteeism problem and middle schoolers’ needs – a shift from districts’ graduation-heavy focus.

But the legislation’s rough framework needs refinement.

The governor and legislators should explore other questions that assess the rigor of Oregon’s system. Considering some of the actions Oregon has taken in recent years – like suspending a requirement for high school students to demonstrate proficiency in key skills – should the state track other metrics to show the value of an Oregon diploma?

And while Kotek’s proposal sidesteps the issue of Oregon’s overly permissive opt-out law, policymakers should re-evaluate how allowing students to skip standardized testing for any reason undermines the state’s data and limits evaluations of students’ progress.

#### **District leaders say Oregon school reform plan gets the details wrong**

*Salem Reporter | By Rachel Alexander*

An ambitious effort by Gov. Tina Kotek to have the state hold struggling schools accountable is getting pushback from school leaders, who say her plan won’t help students.

Salem-Keizer School District Superintendent Andrea Castañeda is among a group raising concerns about the governor’s proposal. They say it relies on unproven methods and lacks key details to help districts and schools make meaningful progress.

Castañeda, who helped design school accountability systems in Rhode Island, said many of the governor’s ideas are already being done in Salem-Keizer. Those include using data throughout the school year to identify struggling students and involving local school boards in setting and monitoring goals. But she said there’s no data showing coaching by state officials works to help struggling schools better serve students.

#### **Oregon schools to get another record payout from state lands revenue**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt*

Oregon’s 197 school districts will get nearly \$77 million in additional funding this year from revenues generated from leases and industry permitted on state lands.

That’s a record payout from the Common School Fund and \$2.5 million more than schools received from the fund in 2024, officials from the Oregon Department of State Lands announced Thursday. It is \$12 million more than districts received from the fund three years ago, in 2022.

#### **Listen: PPS Superintendent talks tackling budget gap, state directives and federal cuts**

*KOIN | By Ken Boddie*

She joined Eye on Northwest Politics to discuss these obstacles, which include a budget gap, possible new directives on student performance from the state, as well as federal cuts to the U.S. Department of Education which impact us here at home.

### **POLITICS**

#### **Capital Chatter: Four ways federal turmoil can impact Oregon**

*Oregon Capital Insider* | By Dick Hughes

Oregon legislators, be forewarned. Don't be tempted to open the state's checkbook again and again. The state, national and global economies are too topsy-turvy to count on the good times continuing.

### [Oregon insiders: Who's who in and around state government](#)

*Oregon Capital Insider* | By Dick Hughes

Senate President Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, appointed **Sens. Dick Anderson, R-Lincoln City**, and Sara Gelser Blouin, D-Corvallis, to the Legislative Commission on Indian Services. They replace former Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Portland.

The U.S. Senate confirmed former Oregon Congresswoman Lori Chavez-DeRemer, R-5th District, as President Donald Trump's secretary of labor. Oregonians who served in previous presidential cabinets include Bonneville Power Administrator Don Hodel, who was President Ronald Reagan's secretary of energy and then secretary of interior, and Neil Goldschmidt, who was President Jimmy Carter's transportation secretary before being elected Oregon governor.

Julia Shumway is now editor of the Oregon Capital Chronicle, moving up from deputy editor. Lynne Terry resigned as editor. Shumway currently serves as president of the Oregon Capitol press corps.

### [Opinion | A Story About Salmon That Almost Had a Happy Ending](#)

*The New York Times*

Completion of the world's largest dam removal project — which [demolished](#) four Klamath River hydroelectric dams on both sides of the California-Oregon border — has been celebrated as a monumental achievement, signaling the emerging political power of Native American tribes and the river-protection movement.

### [DOGE Cuts Echo Down the Klamath River](#)

*Willamette Week* | By Aaron Mesh

"In the past month, however, the Trump administration suspended funding authorized in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other Biden-era legislation for the wetlands restoration and other Klamath projects, and laid off U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration employees who facilitated those projects," he writes.

It's not clear how many people working on the Klamath restoration lost their jobs in recent weeks, or how the river might suffer. DOGE has fired at least 500 probationary employees from NOAA, some of whom were based in Oregon.

### [Oregon tax kicker refund under fire as lawmakers seek reform](#)

*Statesman Journal* | By Dianne Lugo

Oregonians received part of a record-breaking [\\$5.6 billion kicker](#) when they filed their 2023 tax return. State economists estimate taxpayers will see a \$1.73 billion kicker in 2026, [according to the latest revenue forecast](#).

Supporters of reforming the law argue that the excess tax revenue could be used to fund essential services, especially as lawmakers aim to address an [ongoing housing](#) and homelessness crisis and [poor student outcomes](#). Opponents, however, are fiercely protective of the credit and have made clear they would challenge any changes to the personal kicker.

**Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stayton**, is the chief sponsor of [Senate Bill 399](#). The bill would require Oregon's Department of Revenue to issue kicker refunds in the form of a check instead of a tax credit. Checks were the refund mechanism from the mid-1990s until 2011, according to the Department of Revenue. Girod sponsored an [identical proposal](#) in 2023, but it stalled in the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue. Senate Republicans attempted to pull it out of committee and onto the floor in 2023 with a procedural motion to withdraw the bill from committee, but the motion failed 12-16.

### [These Oregonians cared for their aging parents. The state threatened to take their homes](#)

*Oregon Live* | By Sami Edge

“This piece of property is the only thing my family owns. Me and my daughter, which is my family, this is it,” said Keller, who is 65.

But Keller doesn’t know if she’ll be able to keep the house, which first belonged to her mother. She’s mired in a monthslong battle with the Oregon Department of Human Services, which says Keller must pay back \$71,734 for the Medicaid-funded health services her mother, Wynne Dilworth, received in the last two years before she died.

### **[Oregon keeps shedding factory jobs, but is the worst behind us?](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Mike Rogoway*

Oregon manufacturing jobs, which never fully recovered from the pandemic, are heading south again. The state’s factories employ nearly 14,000 fewer people than they did at the start of 2023. Oregon manufacturing jobs are at their lowest point since the pandemic’s early days, [according to new state data](#) issued last Monday.

### **[Oregon lawmakers consider more funding for free tax preparation program](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alan Cohen*

Oregon lawmakers will consider nearly doubling funding for a program that provides free tax preparation to low-income families, which participating organizations say is stretched to its limits.

The Legislature created the Tax Infrastructure Grant Program in 2022 to help low-income Oregonians claim the tax credits they earned and work past barriers like limited English proficiency. More than a dozen participating organizations across the state receive funding from the Department of Human Services through this program to provide low-income families with free tax preparation year-round, but department spokesman Jake Sunderland said most need additional funding to keep up with the demand for their services.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced House Bill 2991 to increase the program’s funding from \$8 million to \$14 million per two-year budget cycle, as demand for free tax preparation rises.

More than 14,000 taxpayers filed through the program in 2024 and they had an average gross income of \$27,818, according to a [report](#) from DHS. 15% of them had never filed taxes or had done so intermittently in the previous five years.

### **[Bills advance to help Oregonians with utility hikes, adapt to extreme weather](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Gosia Wozniacka*

State lawmakers and environmental groups are looking to increase energy efficiency, reduce power costs and help people adapt to extreme weather by backing a slew of bills that are advancing in the Legislature.

The proposals would help Oregonians get a break from [climbing utility bills](#), install electric [heat pumps](#) and access community shelters and support in case of natural disasters, including heat waves, wildfires and unhealthy air quality days.

### **[Oregon colleges and universities are not wavering amid federal attacks on DEI](#)**

*OPB | By Tiffany Camhi*

The Trump administration has alleged that these programs unlawfully discriminate against some students and it’s threatened to pull federal funding from schools that continue to run them. Some universities across the nation have responded to the federal pressures by shutting down their diversity offices and eliminating equity-related groups.

That’s not the case in Oregon.

Higher education institutions in the Beaver State are largely staying the course amid federal directives to quash inclusivity efforts. Administrators and faculty leading diversity, equity and inclusion programs that OPB spoke to believe they have been following the law all along.

### **[Commentary: The reality of going on strike](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle*

Many people don't know the realities of striking unless they have experienced it themselves. It's not free time off from work. It is costly and scary. Even if unemployment benefits are given to striking workers, going on strike will continue to have a price.

### [Oregon House advances bill to protect lottery winners' identities](#)

*KATU*

Lawmakers in the Oregon House have introduced an amendment to House Bill 3115, aiming to protect the identities of lottery prize winners by keeping their names and addresses anonymous unless they provide written consent for disclosure.

This legislative move is part of a broader effort to address issues related to the resale of winning lottery tickets, a practice that can facilitate tax evasion and impede the state's ability to collect debts such as child support.

### [Oregon Governor Tina Kotek Defies EPA Deregulation Efforts](#)

*Hoodline | By Lucas Wright*

Oregon's Governor Tina Kotek openly criticized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its recent rollback of environmental regulations, expressing her dismay and a steadfast commitment to combat climate change within her state.

Kotek's resolve is to ensure that, despite the direction the federal government is heading, Oregon will not waver in its pursuit of innovative solutions to the climate crisis, as mentioned by the [Governor's office](#).

### [Tillamook dialysis center delays prompt new legislation](#)

*The Lund Report | By Raymond Rendleman*

State Rep. Cyrus Javadi says he's introducing a bill to ensure delays to a new treatment center for kidney patients don't happen again, saying 'this is something we need to fix'.

### [Oregon, nine other states hit 2013 goal of getting 3.3 million electric vehicles on roads by 2025](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt*

The states have collectively registered 3.3 million new electric vehicles in the last 12 years, fulfilling a 2013 agreement to do so by 2025, according to a [report](#) shared Monday by the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management, a Boston-based nonprofit association of state air pollution control agencies.

### [The fight to keep it local at Mt. Bachelor ski resort: Beat Check podcast](#)

*Oregon Live*

Bachelor is a coveted property, after all. So the corporate titans of the ski industry would be swarming, likely offering bids in the neighborhood of \$200 million.

But the movement was quickly celebrated as a potential win for the underdog, drawing [national attention](#) for its effort to keep the United States' seventh-largest ski resort out of the hands of corporate America — and in the hands of local ski bums.

### [How Trump job cuts could leave Oregon forests more vulnerable to wildfires](#)

*Oregon Live | By Ted Sickinger*

After Oregon's [record wildfire season in 2024](#), local communities and government officials are concerned that ongoing personnel purges at federal land management agencies could leave the region shorthanded for pre-season fire mitigation projects and unprepared to combat deadly conflagrations when they break out later this year.

[The on-again-off-again nature](#) of Trump's job cuts are only adding to the confusion. Some 3,400 probationary employees were reportedly fired by the U.S. Forest Service, a number that included 217 employees in Oregon, according to local union representatives.

But this week the U.S. Department of Agriculture said it would temporarily rehire the thousands of probationary employees nationwide who were fired in February after the Merit Systems Protections Board declared it had "reasonable grounds to believe" the terminations were illegal.

The reinstatements are only temporary, however, while an investigation continues. And they come as federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, are under orders from the Trump administration to submit plans this week for even larger reductions in force that could impact the same employees, who have less seniority, and cut into permanent staff that were unaffected by previous layoffs.

#### [Gov. Tina Kotek has stayed largely silent about the Trump presidency. Will that approach pay off?](#)

*Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes*

But Kotek took a different path. Known for her steadfast focus on housing, behavioral health and education, the Democrat dedicated the majority of her speech to those priority issues and stuck to her usual message.

Kotek's measured response that day has continued as Trump's second term has unfolded in unprecedented and chaotic ways, with deep cuts to federal employees, jolting changes to policies on diversity and equity and threats and real initiatives to deport immigrants.

#### [Santiam Canyon wastewater plant faces regulatory hurdles](#)

*Statesman Journal | By Bill Poehler*

Marion County is building a new wastewater treatment plant in Mill City with \$50 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds from the state Legislature.

The catch: It has to spend all of the money by the end of 2026, a quick timeframe for such a large project.

#### [OPINION: New bill may destroy already existing affordable housing](#)

*KOIN | By Ken Boddie*

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek has made it clear that creating more affordable housing is a priority this legislative session.

However, the owner of a manufactured home park for seniors in East Multnomah County says a bill being considered in Salem could jeopardize affordable housing that already exists.

#### [Where some see roadkill in Oregon, others find a feast](#)

*OPB | By Jennifer Baires*

She is part of a small but growing trend in Oregon to salvage food from the state's ribbons of roads. It's a movement that gained visibility when [Oregon lawmakers legalized the practice for deer and elk in 2019.](#) Since then, the state has issued more than 8,000 salvage permits to people recovering roadkill, with annual permit totals on the rise in recent years.

Most of the permits are from cities along Interstate 5, where more cars on the road mean more animals hit. But even without a high-traffic federal interstate, Bend ranks fifth among Oregon cities with the most people applying for permits.

#### [Oregon State Parks once again see record number of visitors](#)

*OPB | By Rachael McDonald*

The agency says there were nearly 53.85 million estimated visits last year. That's up 3% from the year before for coastal parks.

#### [Oregon officials and advocates meet in Eugene to address human trafficking](#)

*OPB | By Brian Bull*

The [Human Trafficking Hotline's 2023 data](#) show nearly 250 victims were involved in trafficking cases in Oregon, most of them female. The [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) says there are currently 43 active trafficking cases in Oregon.

#### [Oregon lawmakers consider ban on toxic 'forever chemicals'](#)

*KATU | By Sana Aljobory*

The House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment heard testimony on Thursday regarding [House Bill 3512](#), a proposed law aimed at prohibiting the manufacture and use of toxic PFAS chemicals in Oregon starting in 2026.

## Terminated federal workers in Oregon in the 'dark' about whether they'll be reinstated following court orders

*Oregon Live* / By Yesenia Amaro

Terminated federal [probationary workers in Oregon](#) say they are in the dark about what will happen following rulings by two federal judges who ordered the Trump administration last week to reinstate fired employees from more than a dozen agencies.

The number of federal probationary workers in Oregon who have been terminated is not yet known, but as of last spring, Oregon had about 29,700 federal employees, and some 4,700 of them were in probationary periods last August.