

Oregon News

POLITICS

Oregon Republicans introduce bill to repeal wildfire hazard map

KDRV

Oregon House and Senate Republicans are continuing to push back against the state's wildfire hazard map, introducing a bill on Tuesday to repeal the map.

Lawmakers backing HB 3944 include **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles)**, House Republican Leader Christine Drazan (R-Canby), Rep. Bobby Levy (R-Echo) and Sen. David Brock-Smith (R-Port Orford).

Republicans in Oregon Legislature seek to repeal state's controversial wildfire risk map

Baker City Herald

Republicans in the Oregon Legislature introduced a bill Tuesday, March 18, that would repeal the map showing the wildfire risk for every tax lot in the state, a map that critics, including Baker County commissioners, say is rife with mistakes that can reduce property values and force some rural residents, including in Baker County, to spend more money if they want to build a home on their land. House Bill 3944 would repeal the map and regulations for landowners whose property is both rated as at extreme risk and is also in the wildland-urban interface, typically an area in or near a fire-prone forest.

"Oregonians deserve real solutions, not more government overreach," **Sen. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, the Senate Republican Leader**, said in a press release. "This new legislation is a unified effort by Republican legislators to repeal the deeply flawed wildfire hazard maps and restore fairness for over 100,000 homeowners. We have an opportunity to correct past mistakes and bring certainty back to property owners across the state."

States with many EVs try to make up for drop in gas tax funds

AP News | By Claire Rush

Oregon transportation officials say that without more funding, residents like Taylor could see further declines in the quality of roads, highways and bridges starting this year. But revenues from gas taxes paid by drivers at the pump are projected to decrease as more people adopt [electric and fuel-efficient cars](#), forcing officials to look for new ways to fund transportation infrastructure.

States with aggressive climate goals like Oregon face a conundrum: EVs can help reduce emissions in the transportation sector, the nation's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, but they also mean less gas tax revenue in government coffers.

The Oregon Department of Transportation — citing inflation, projections of declining gas tax revenues and certain spending limitations — has estimated a shortfall topping \$350 million for the next budget cycle.

Republican lawmakers say the gas tax revenue issue has been compounded by the department mismanaging its money. [An audit](#) released in January found the department overestimated its revenue for the current budget cycle by over \$1 billion and failed to properly track certain funds.

"It really is about making sure that the existing dollars that are being spent by the department are being spent efficiently and effectively," said state **Sen. Bruce Starr**, GOP co-vice chair of the joint transportation committee.

Oregon's legislature passes Medicaid tax extension in bipartisan vote

OPB | By Amelia Templeton

The Oregon Senate has passed a bill that will raise billions in federal dollars for the state's Medicaid program, and allocate a substantial portion back to hospitals.

Minority **Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**, voted against the bill but said he hoped it would advance in spite of his opposition.

Bonham cast his vote, he said, to draw attention to the uneven impact of the bill on different payers and on Oregonians. "The devil is in the details," he said.

Hospitals, he noted, [effectively do not pay the tax](#), since they collectively receive back payments through the federal Medicaid program that equal the money the state collects from them.

By contrast, the insurance programs taxed by the state don't receive an equivalent direct benefit, **Bonham** noted, and said they pass on the cost of the tax in the form of higher premiums for people buying insurance plans.

Bonham and other Republicans had proposed making insurance policies issued to individuals, school districts and small employers exempt from the tax.

"Not to diminish the global budget, but to hold certain people harmless," **Bonham** said.

In the end, Democrats declined to adopt any of the amendments to the bill that Republicans had proposed, but committed to continue conversations across the aisle about how to improve implementation of the tax.

Republican Sens. Dick Anderson, R-Lincoln City, Fred Girod, R, Stayton, Mike McLane, R-Burns, Todd Nash, R-Enterprise, Bruce Starr, R-McMinnville, and Suzanne Webber, R-Tillamook joined the Democratic majority and voted for the bill.

[Oregon Senate approves renewing tax to bolster state's Medicaid program](#)

Oregon Live | By Kristine de Leon

The Oregon Senate voted Monday to pass a bill that would secure billions in federal funding for Oregon's Medicaid program and ensure that a significant share flows back to hospitals.

Republicans who voted against the bill argued that they were in support of funding Medicaid but argued that the taxing mechanism needed to be updated and improved so that certain people wouldn't be burdened more than others.

Sen. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said the insurer tax should also apply to employer-sponsored health plans, which are federally regulated and exempt from state insurance premium taxes.

Bonham, who voted against the bill, said that gives bigger employers an advantage over smaller ones that typically get insurance coverage for their employees through the state's small group insurance marketplace, where plans are subject to the tax. HB 2010, Bonham said, "creates a doom loop death spiral for the small group market," as the number of people participating in those state-regulated health plans have declined and a small group of people have to shoulder these insurance premium taxes.

[Oregon Health Plan funding bill passes, sent to governor](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

Oregon lawmakers have approved a bill to ensure continued coverage for more than 1.4 million people on the Oregon Health Plan.

The Senate approved House Bill 2010 Monday on a vote of 22 to 5. **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles; Sens. Diane Linthicum, R-Beatty; Noah Robinson, R-Cave Junction; David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford; and Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer; voted against the bill.**

Bonham said he opposed the bill because it had moved through the Legislature quickly and ignored the impact on small-group insurers and school districts.

Sen. Bruce Starr, R-Dundee, said he was "surprised, to be honest" with the opposition. He expected a "pro-forma" hearing, he said, because of how the bill fits into the overall budget. Starr said he believed there had been "thoughtful conversation in committee."

[Oregon lawmakers unite to tackle alarming rates of chronic absenteeism in schools](#)

KATU | By Deb Knapp

The consequences are dire if the state of Oregon doesn't get kids back in the classroom. That's the message from a bipartisan group of lawmakers working to address chronic absenteeism in Oregon schools.

"Across the board, we're seeing absenteeism as an issue that is alarming," said **Oregon state Sen. Suzanne Weber, R-Tillamook**.

Weber, along with state Rep. Hoa Nguyen, D-Portland, Damascus, created a bipartisan group to come up with legislation to address chronic absenteeism.

Weber says this was an issue before COVID-19, but “then COVID just exacerbated all of these situations and made it so that it just wasn't totally necessary to have to be in school.”

“We have about 38% of our students here in Oregon that are chronically absent,” Weber said.

[**Oregon Republican lawmaker reads sexually explicit passage on House floor to call out bill that would ban book bans**](#)

Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes

[Rep. Dwayne Yunker](#), a Republican from Grants Pass, sparked a small frenzy in the Oregon House Monday morning when he read aloud a book passage detailing an explicit sex scene to protest a bill that would ban book bans in schools.

[**Oregon Measure 114 gun law modifications receive pushback**](#)

Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo

Oregonians packed a Capitol hearing room to capacity Monday afternoon to testify on a bill that would alter a controversial gun control ballot measure that requires Oregonians to apply for and obtain a permit before purchasing a gun and outlaws large-capacity magazines that hold more than 10 rounds. Most of the thousands of people who have submitted written testimony on [House Bill 3075](#) are opposed.

As the legal battle continues, lawmakers are weighing changes including increasing the length of time a “permit agent” has to issue or deny permits required under Measure 114 after completing a gun safety class and a federal background check, increasing fees to apply for a permit or renew one, and adding alternatives to a firearms training course or class that would meet the requirement of a firearm safety course for the permit.

[**Oregon cracks down on hunters using thermal imaging cameras**](#)

OPB | By Kristian Foden-Vencil

As the cost of thermal imaging cameras has dropped, from thousands of dollars to about \$200, Totey says, more hunters have started using them to find deer or elk. But officials are cracking down on hunters using the technology.

A few years ago, the state made hunting with thermal imaging cameras illegal. Totey says the Oregon Hunters Association agrees with the ban.

The [Oregon Hunters Association](#) defines ethical hunting and fair chase as the sportsmanlike and lawful taking of a wild animal in a manner that doesn’t give the hunter an unfair advantage. Unfair means the deer or elk or bird should have a reasonable chance of escape.

[**In hopes of promoting Oregon fishing industry, lawmakers propose bringing seafood to public schools**](#)

KLCC | By Rebecca Hansen-White

Most of the seafood eaten in Oregon isn’t caught locally, according to a study from the Oregon Coast Visitors Association.

A few Oregon Coast lawmakers are hoping to change that with a bill that would pay for seafood education, and work to serve some seafood in public schools.

If [HB 3568](#) passes, the state would spend roughly \$800,000 to assist schools in acquiring seafood for students, training for school kitchen staff on seafood preparation, and an education campaign to teach children about local fishing and shellfish harvesting.

The bill was also supported by **Sen. Suzanne Weber, a Tillamook Republican**, who said the bill would make a big difference to coastal communities and provide a healthier, high quality protein for students. “Colleagues, it’s rare that we get to do so much good for so many with such a small investment,” she said.

[**GUEST COLUMN: Oregon’s flavored tobacco ban will hurt small businesses, won’t curb youth use**](#)

Rogue Valley Times

Oregon lawmakers have a plan to ban flavored tobacco statewide, arguing that it will prevent youth tobacco use, but this proposed policy misses the mark.

In fact, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reports the youth smoking rate is at a low of 2.1%, down 86% since 2001 and e-cigarette use has dropped by 57% since 2019.

Our 36 stores across Washington and Oregon provide stable jobs, career growth opportunities, and an essential service to our communities. We keep people going with coffee, energy drinks, healthy foods, and grab-and-go meals. Flavored tobacco and nicotine products play a critical role in our business. Lawmakers' plans to ban flavored tobacco threatens not only our livelihood but also the employees and customers who rely on us.

[Democrats' Quest to Ban Flavored Tobacco Products Picks Up Steam](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

Senate Bill 702 would ban the sale of flavored tobacco products or "inhalant delivery system product" — i.e., vapes—and flavored nicotine products, including synthetic nicotine pouches. It would also require that all tobacco products be sold at licensed retailers, an attempt to block people from side-stepping the ban by ordering products online.

Although Democrats hold supermajorities in both chambers, passage will require some heavy lifting. A similar bill died in 2023, and the tobacco industry and its allies have killed many such bills across the country. After a March 4 hearing before Reynolds' Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee, the bill awaits further action.

[Lawmakers debate bill to expedite eviction of squatters with 24-hour notice](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

Lawmakers are debating a bill that would empower property owners to evict squatters with just 24 hours' notice.

The proposed legislation defines a squatter as an individual who occupies a property without a valid rental agreement or tenant authorization. The bill aims to address the issue of squatters exploiting legal loopholes and slow eviction processes to occupy properties without the owner's consent. By clarifying that squatters do not possess tenant rights, the bill seeks to eliminate legal delays associated with rental protections.

"House Bill 3522 provides a necessary and commonplace solution by ensuring that property owners have an effective and timely legal mechanism to reclaim possession of their property," said Jonathan Clay of Multifamily NW.

[Oregon cities unveil a new poll as they press for stronger anti-camping laws](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt

Oregon cities hoping to win new authority to restrict homeless camps are rushing to convince lawmakers to take their request seriously — and pushing a new poll they say shows change is needed.

The League of Oregon Cities is circulating data that suggest most voters disapprove of elected officials' attempts to stem the state's homeless crisis and support stronger policies to restrict camping.

The poll is the latest salvo in an ongoing debate over how the state should regulate homeless camping. It follows a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court last year that the southern Oregon city of Grants Pass didn't violate the U.S. Constitution with its anti-camping policy.

The opinion in *Johnson v. Grants Pass* tossed out earlier appeals court rulings that blocked local and state governments from banning camping if they couldn't offer alternatives like shelter. In doing so, the court freed up western states controlled by those earlier rulings to more forcefully regulate camps.

That's because of [a 2021 bill pushed by Gov. Tina Kotek](#) when she served as House speaker. The bill set a new standard for when and how cities can sweep. Under the law, cities risk being sued if their policies are not "objectively reasonable," a term that is not defined in statute.

Cities have [said for months](#) they would make rolling back the 2021 law a central goal of this year's session. They say the policy doesn't give them enough certainty on what kinds of policies they're allowed to pass, and creates an ever-present risk of a lawsuit.

[Lawmakers push for stricter oversight of Oregon care facilities after tragic death](#)

KATU | By Shelby Slaughter

More than a year after a woman was found dead near a memory care facility in Sandy, Ore., lawmakers are looking to enact change.

[Senate Bill 739](#), sponsored by Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin, was a hot topic at the legislature. The bill aims to prohibit a person from serving as an interim residential care facility administrator without a license. It also requires DHS to conduct regular inspections of new residential care facilities.

Another bill, [Senate Bill 811](#), has a similar goal. It aims to add new requirements for obtaining a license to operate a residential facility or adult foster home. It also looks to require DHS and the Oregon Health Authority to inspect residential facilities and adult foster homes under certain conditions.

[Oregon corporate kicker changes? Bill proposes funds go to school maintenance](#)

KOIN | By Joey Vacca

A public hearing on HB 3360 was held in Salem Monday to discuss the bill that proposes redirecting the corporate kicker from the state's general fund for public education and instead using it to fund construction and maintenance grants for school districts that have not been able to get bonds approved. Now lawmakers are considering redirecting the corporate kicker to give districts with unfinished projects a chance to secure the funding to get them done. This would only be available for districts that submitted general obligation bonds during the last three years, have not gotten voter approval for general obligation bonds in the last 10 years, and reserves of less than 8% of its budget.

[Open Primary Bill Would Enfranchise Oregon's Largest Group of Voters](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

The Oregon House Rules Committee will hold a hearing March 19 on the latest effort to enfranchise the largest single group of voters in the state: those unaffiliated with any party.

[INSIDE DOUGLAS COUNTY 3.17.25](#)

KQEN News radio

Live from Salem, **State Senator David Brock Smith** covers current topics facing the Oregon State Legislature.

[Top 5 Oregon takeaways from latest US Census data](#)

OPB | By Alex Zielinski

Multnomah is growing, but not as fast as the rest of the major counties in the broader Portland metro area. Between 2023 and 2024, Clackamas County grew 0.3%, Washington County grew 1%, and Clark County, Washington expanded by 1%. This echoes [data shared last month](#) by the Portland Metro Chamber, which pointed to decreasing jobs and high taxes in Multnomah County as reasons why. The Census ranked counties with populations over 20,000 by the fastest population decline, and Oregon's Curry County came in fourth. Curry County is in the state's southwestern corner, and home to Brookings, Gold Beach and Port Orford. According to the report, it experienced a 2% population drop between 2023 and 2024 — accounting for a net loss of about 500 people.

residents may be moving to neighboring counties.

[Oregon population growth among smallest in US: Census data](#)

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

Oregon had one of the smallest percentages of growth in country from 2023 to 2024 at 0.4% or about 18,700 people for an estimated population of more than 4.27 million as of July 1, 2024. With more deaths than births, the state's population would have declined without people moving here.

[A single sentence relieves critics of proposed Oregon utility law](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Oregon lawmakers [on Tuesday tweaked a bill intended to increase fire mitigation](#) to ensure it does not also offer utilities immunity from liability in lawsuits for wildfires ignited by power lines.

The change to a single sentence in [House Bill 3666](#) comes as a relief to some critics, who feared that giving utilities wildfire safety certificates that establish they've "acted reasonably" by state standards would in effect offer them absolute immunity from liability in lawsuits if their equipment causes a wildfire.

[Oregon's recreation industry wants more legal protection. An injured few are pushing back](#)

Oregon Live | By Jackie Hale

This year's [House Bill 3140](#) is the third attempt in the last decade to settle the issue of recreation liability, as lawmakers have struggled to reconcile with the court's decision to [invalidate broad liability waivers](#) that would protect recreational businesses from negligence claims.

[Environmental groups sue Eugene utility, alleging failure to protect Chinook salmon, bull trout](#)

OPB | By Rebecca Hansen-White

A coalition of environmental groups sued the Eugene Water and Electric Board this week, accusing the public utility of violating the Endangered Species Act.

The groups argued the dam, located about 70 miles east of Eugene on the McKenzie River, has prevented endangered Chinook salmon and bull trout from migrating and blocked access to cold water.

[Commentary: Fisheries and groundwater: A tale of two resources](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By William Jaeger

Among renewable natural resources, ocean fisheries and groundwater aquifers are arguably the most difficult to manage. They are also very similar: both are hidden below the surface; both are highly variable and uncertain; both are typically exploited by many users in different locations; and both support people's livelihoods directly and indirectly, and benefit other stakeholders, species, and ecosystems.

[Portland councilors discuss safety of storing oil in an industrial hub sitting on a quake zone](#)

OPB | By April Ehrlich

Portland city councilors are assessing what they could do about hundreds of millions of gallons of fuels that, if a looming natural disaster happens, could lead to the worst public health crisis in North American history.

Portland is particularly vulnerable to the 9.0 Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake that scientists predict could happen in the next few decades, based on historical geographic data. The city's six-mile hub of fuel storage and shipping terminals along the Willamette River is expected to crumble due to an earthquake phenomenon called liquefaction, a type of riverside quicksand effect that could release millions of gallons of fuel.

[Oregon Department of Emergency Management activates coordination center for widespread flooding](#)

OPB | By Amanda Linares

As flood warnings continue in parts of Southwest Oregon, the Oregon Department of Emergency Management has activated a Level 3 regional emergency response. Heavy rains brought widespread flooding over the weekend, and the threat of additional flood damage remains, especially for areas with steep terrain.

[Portland Lawyer Again Files Ballot Initiative That Would Make County Pay Crime Victims](#)

Willamette Week | By Aaron Mesh

Portland lawyer John DiLorenzo has filed a new version of a ballot initiative that would require Multnomah County to pay up to \$2,500 to any victim of a person or property crime.

EDUCATION

[The Oregon Reform Education Act introduced](#)

NewsBreak

State Sen. David Brock Smith (R-Curry, Coos and Douglas counties) and State Representative E. Werner Reschke (R-Klamath Falls) have introduced Senate Bill 1100, described by the two as “an omnibus education bill to bring real reform to benefit students, teachers, and their families across the state.”

[Plans emerge for pared-back high schools in Portland](#)

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

New details are surfacing about what exactly could be lopped off three [planned high school modernization projects](#) at Portland Public Schools in order to save money that could go instead to backlogged maintenance needs at the district’s middle and elementary schools.

[New Portland Public Schools plan cuts fewer teachers](#)

KATU

PPS [needs to cut \\$40 million from its budget for next year](#) and after getting community feedback, the district may be cutting fewer teachers than originally planned.

[Too Many High Schools](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

Portland Public Schools has a math problem.

The district enrolls 13,138 students across its nine major high schools. But enrollment numbers are in a steep decline. By the 2033-34 school year, population researchers at Portland State University project, those same schools will hold just 10,765 students.

School buildings across PPS are in bad shape. The high schools are no exception, which is why the district has renovated six of them over the past decade. Each now has capacity for 1,700 students, except for Roosevelt High School in North Portland, which was built to hold 1,350 and has since expanded to a capacity closer to 1,600.

If the projections hold true in eight years, each high school except Roosevelt would be about 550 students below capacity if students were evenly distributed. In total, the district is overbuilding by more than 4,400 students—enough to fill more than two high schools.

[Enrollment Projections Spell Trouble for Portland Public Schools](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

The capacity of high schools that Portland Public Schools intends to rebuild is much greater than the number of students expected to attend them. How big a problem is that? It depends on how much stock you place in the enrollment forecasts by Portland State University’s Population Research Center.

PSU researchers have delivered gloomy projections to the school district since the pandemic. Not only do they expect the district’s overall high school enrollment to decline by 18% over the next eight years, they foresee that the two high schools whose rebuilds are on the May ballot will lose students, and Jefferson High School will see little change after its overhaul (see graphs right).

[Changing a School Bond Is a Dicey Proposition](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

In May, Portland Public Schools will present a \$1.83 billion property tax bond to voters, with money in it to rebuild Cleveland, Ida B. Wells and Jefferson high schools. If approved, it will cost a district homeowner an estimated \$2.50 for every \$1,000 of assessed value, which matches the current rate. But if those high schools are built to hold 1,700 students each, Portland State University’s Population Research Center projects the district won’t have enough students to fill most of them even close to capacity.

HOUSING

[Lawmakers consider bill to limit AI in rent pricing, protect tenants](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

Lawmakers are currently deliberating [Senate Bill 722](#), which aims to prohibit property managers and landlords from using AI-driven software to determine rent prices and vacancies.

The proposed legislation would ban the use of AI that utilizes non-competitor data, such as actual rent prices and occupancy rates, which are not intended for public use.'

[Portland Apartment Construction Falls to Lowest Level in More Than a Decade](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

In particular, Kotek wants more market-rate houses and apartments, not just affordable ones. It's a bet that increasing the total inventory will make more of that inventory affordable. On March 6, she and Portland Mayor Keith Wilson convened a group of builders and developers at City Hall to spitball ways to speed up construction of private complexes.

A look at the data shows why they're lashing the industry to do more. Last year, apartment construction in Portland metro area fell to levels not seen since 2013, according to statistics collected by CoStar, a real estate information firm based in Arlington, Va. (see chart, below).

KOTEK

[A conversation with Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek](#)

OPB

Since [our last conversation](#) with Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, President Trump has enacted [tariffs](#) and [mass layoffs](#) that could significantly impact Oregon's federal workforce and economy. The Oregon Legislature has also begun its biennial session, taking up issues around [education](#), [transportation](#) and [housing](#). Kotek joins us in the studio to talk about all of that and more.

[Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek on school accountability, transportation funding and other big issues in the legislative session](#)

OPB | By Gemma DiCarlo

The Oregon Legislature is two months into its five-month biennial session. Lawmakers are considering bills on [education](#), [transportation](#) and [housing](#), among other issues. The state is also grappling with federal [tariffs](#) and [mass layoffs](#) that could significantly impact Oregon's workforce and economy.

[Oregon Gov. Kotek testifies for behavioral health workforce, treatment funds](#)

KOIN | By Michaela Bourgeois

After releasing her [2025-2027 budget proposal](#), Oregon Governor Tina Kotek testified in the Oregon legislature on Tuesday in support of new investments meant to bolster behavioral health across the state.

During [testimony](#) for [Senate Bill 142](#), Governor Kotek said four key investments in the bill will increase the behavioral health workforce while also increasing access to care.

TRUMP

[How federal funding cuts are affecting one small school district in an Oregon community that voted heavily for Trump](#)

OPB | By Natalie Pate

The Grant School District is in a bind.

The small, rural district in Eastern Oregon is facing a critical financial and operational dilemma due to the unexpected suspension of the U.S. Department of Energy's [2024 Renew America's Schools](#) grant program.

The school district — which Superintendent Mark Witty said has experienced significant economic hardship and declining enrollment over the years — was promised more than \$682,000 for energy efficiency improvements at Grant Union Jr./Sr. High School. However, recent layoffs at the Department of Energy have [jeopardized their future](#).

[Are Trump officials eying sites in Oregon to hold undocumented immigrants?](#)

Oregon Live | By Yesenia Amaro

Two months into President Donald Trump's return to office, there are no publicly apparent signs that federal officials are working to find a location in Oregon to detain undocumented immigrants en masse.

Speculation and concerns have been simmering in the weeks since The New York Times reported that the Trump administration was devising a preliminary plan to detain undocumented immigrants at military sites across the country, beginning in Texas. Oregon was reportedly one of 11 states with facilities under consideration.

[Senators introduce bill to reverse VA cuts from Trump era](#)

KATU / By Sana Aljobory

U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, along with their Senate colleagues, introduced the "Putting Veterans First Act," a comprehensive piece of legislation aimed at reversing what they describe as "egregious cuts" made by the current Trump administration.