

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **Opinion: Proposed new Oregon tax on beer and wine could rise to 8%**

*Bulletin Editorial Board*

It is often pointed out in alcohol tax debates that Oregon has not raised such taxes in a long time. The tax on wine was changed in 1983. The tax on beer has remained the same since 1977. But just because the tax hasn't changed isn't a reason to raise a tax.

The amendment proposes that most of the money raised from this tax, 85%, goes to alcohol and drug abuse prevention for people under age 21, a serious issue. The remaining 15% would go to counties based on population. We have no quarrel with those causes.

One argument that has also been used against a proposed tax is that the state only spends about 3% of the taxes it already receives from alcohol taxation directly on mental health, alcoholism and drug services. From 2019 to 2021, for instance, the general fund got 57% of the revenue from the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission. Of course, that money couldn't just be shifted out of the general fund without cutting something else.

#### **Listen: In Oregon and Washington, affordable housing upgrades are threatened as federal funds freeze**

*OPB | Elizabeth Castillo*

Like other federal agencies, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is facing possible cuts to staffing and funding. The federal agency's green and resilient retrofit program is intended to upgrade aging affordable housing. The [program](#) would also help fund proposals that reduced energy use.

#### **Kotek backs controversial Oregon water transfer reviews**

*Capital Press*

Senate Bill 1153, which would prohibit transfers that harm aquatic species or water quality, has a powerful backer that lawmakers are unlikely to ignore: Gov. Tina Kotek, whose natural resource office considers the proposal a priority.

#### **A promising Oregon experiment to tackle teen addiction hits a setback**

*Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman, Lillian Hughes*

In 2023, Oregon lawmakers outlined a plan to open up to nine specialized high schools, [called recovery schools](#), for students working to overcome addiction.

Marc Siegel, a spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Education, said Kotek's proposed budget allocates funds for the three recovery schools in Oregon – Harmony Academy and Rivercrest Academy in the Portland area and the soon-to-open Discovery Academy in Salem – to continue operations. The governor's proposed budget also includes start-up grant funding available for one additional school, for which the education agency is opening an application process.

Recovery high schools offer standard high school academic courses but add on peer support groups and other resources for students who are reordering their lives after struggling with substance use issues; many are also managing concurrent mental health issues. Importantly, advocates stress, these are "choice" schools — students are not mandated to attend, they have opted in.

Recovery schools are not especially common in the United States. The National Association of Recovery Schools estimates that there are only about 45 such schools nationwide.

Still, the existing schools have a strong track record. University of Oregon researcher Emily Tanner-Smith found that recovery school students across the country were more likely to attend school and have better graduation rates and greater life satisfaction than similar students who did not attend recovery schools. The study also found a reduction in substance use and a corresponding reduction in illegal activity among students who attended recovery high schools.

Were it followed, the plan outlined in [House Bill 2676](#) to open up to nine such schools in Oregon by 2029 would result in one of the country's most robust networks.

#### **From wolves to water, Eastern Oregon lawmakers strike balancing act to move bills forward**

*OPB / By Antonio Sierra*

But a whole host of bills — covering everything from wolves and nitrate pollution, to mental health and housing — have gained traction across the aisle. They show how Eastern Oregon Republicans work in the minority to wield soft power in Salem, in the hope they can bring home some wins for their districts before the long session wraps up this summer.

**State Sen. Todd Nash, R-Enterprise**, and state Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, both have backgrounds in cattle ranching and are the chief sponsors of two bills meant to boost the state's compensation program for livestock and working dogs killed by wolves.

[Senate Bill 777](#) makes changes to the compensation formula that could lead to higher payouts to ranchers. The Legislative Fiscal Office estimates the increased payments would cost the state roughly \$1 million, an issue [Senate Bill 985](#) would address by adding another \$2 million to the state budget for the program.

Nash and Levy have argued that the current program is being underutilized in northeast Oregon, where the wolf population is the highest. Passing the bills would help balance conservation interests and ranchers' livelihoods, they said.

As a former leader for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Nash lobbied for the creation of [a mental health helpline](#) for farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers. Now in his first term as a legislator, Nash is trying to get it permanently funded.

[Senate Bill 779](#) would send \$2 million to keep the AgriStress Helpline operational. The legislature approved establishing the service in 2023. In a February public hearing, Nash, who is sponsoring the bill with Levy, said the money would be put in an investment fund so that interest accrued on the account could sustain the helpline in the future.

"The 'pull yourself up by your boot strings' mentality often prevents our community members from seeking help, making resources like the AgriStress Helpline vital to breaking the cycle," Levy said in the hearing.

[House Bill 3939](#) would grant nearly \$16 million to rural communities across the state, with more than half of that going to Eastern Oregon cities like Baker City, Ontario and Burns. The funding is specifically designated for housing-related infrastructure like roads, utilities and high-speed internet.

The bill's chief sponsor is Rep. Lucetta Elmer, R-McMinnville. It's also backed by Owens and **Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte**. McLane was elected last year to represent a wide swath of Central and Eastern Oregon.

[Oregon lawmakers put forward new gun bill on heels of Measure 114 court decision](#)

*OPB / Bryce Dole*

SB 243 condenses four previous proposals, and the legislation is likely to become a controversial issue among lawmakers during this year's legislative session. Wagner acknowledged Monday that firearm bills cause "deep friction" between the parties, but confirmed that Democrats generally piece together bills to diminish filibustering and floor fights with Republicans.

**Senate Republicans also blasted the measure.**

**"This is no way to govern. Dropping a massive gun control amendment at the last minute, without public scrutiny, is an insult to Oregonians,"** said Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham of The Dalles.

Bonham and his colleagues said the bill did not address the shortage of mental health care available in Oregon and would do little to prevent suicides, the leading type of firearm death.

[Oregon gun bill to raise possession age to 21, establish 72-hour wait splits lawmakers](#)

*Oregon Live / By Maxine Bernstein*

Committee Vice Chair Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, said she was generally opposed to gun control, arguing that most rules harm law-abiding gun owners and don't reduce violence.

Sen. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said he opposed having four significant gun control changes placed in one piece of legislation, not allowing a vote on each regulation.

He said he specifically objected to Senate Bill [243-1](#)'s extended 72-hour waiting period before someone can pick up their purchased gun. Oregon currently has no mandated wait time.

McLane pointed out that voter-approved [Measure 114](#) will already delay a gun purchase for up to 30 to 60 days to get the results of a criminal background check, take a safety course and receive a permit. (The measure has yet to go into effect, stalled by two years of legal challenges, though a separate bill this session would carry out requirements for a permit to buy a gun and limits on large-capacity ammunition magazines, if passed.)

SB243-1's 72-hour wait would go on top of the wait for a permit, McLane said.

"What happens when somebody needs a firearm to defend themselves?" he asked.

Riley, also active in the national group Everytown Survivor Network, recounted how her son Daniel shot and killed himself in 2010. She found that he had searched for gun stores that day about 10:30 a.m., bought a gun by 12:30 p.m. and was dead by 1 p.m.

"So Senator McLane," Riley said, "that's how easy..."

McLane started to respond to Riley, but committee chair Sen. Floyd Prozanski cut him off, telling him, "No feedback."

"But she directed it at me," McLane objected.

"I know she did," responded Prozanski, D-Eugene. "Just take it."

[\*\*Gov. Tina Kotek presses OHSU to shutter primate research center\*\*](#)

*Oregon Live | By Kristine de Leon*

Gov. Tina Kotek has asked leaders at the Oregon Health & Science University to shut down its nationally renowned primate research center, joining a yearslong push by animal rights activists.

[\*\*Listen: PGE project in Forest Park appealed by conservation, neighborhood groups\*\*](#)

*OPB*

A proposed utility project in Forest Park has caused a monthslong clash between environmental groups and Portland General Electric. The [Harborton Reliability Project](#) would remove roughly 400 mature trees on 5 acres of parkland to make way for new power lines. PGE says the grid upgrade is necessary to meet the region's growing demand for electricity, but conservationists say it will damage one of Portland's most important ecological assets.

[\*\*Lawmakers consider extension of Oregon's prison time alternative for parents\*\*](#)

*OPB | By Natalie Pate*

Oregon's Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program started 10 years ago and has served hundreds of kids and parents. It's set to sunset this year if lawmakers don't pass House Bill 2555.

The Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program is an alternative to traditional incarceration with one simple goal: keep families together.

If an individual is convicted of a non-violent crime, and they are pregnant or the biological parent or legal guardian of a minor, they may be able to stay in their homes and communities through this supervision program rather than serve time in prison.

Participants saw double-digit drops in rates of recidivism, arrests and incarceration compared to single parents who went to prison. The program has also helped reduce the number of days justice-impacted children spend on average in foster care — it's sometimes even been the solution that allows children in foster care to reunite with their parents. Plus, it's less expensive.

[\*\*State Lawmakers Consider Strict Cellphone Ban for All Oregon Students\*\*](#)

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*

On Wednesday, the Legislature's House Committee on Education heard public testimony on House Bill 2251, an effort by several legislators to codify a statewide cellphone ban from bell to bell for all students

in Oregon. The proposal was generally well received, though a few key school district advocacy organizations sought less restrictive guidance.

The bill has bipartisan sponsorship. Reps. Kim Wallan (R-Medford) and April Dobson (D-Happy Valley) and Sen. Lisa Reynolds (D-West Portland) all testified in support of the strongest version of the bill, which calls for an “off and away all day” approach (a controversial one at districts, including Portland Public Schools, [which passed a similar policy in January](#)). All three placed some blame on cellphones for Oregon’s dismal academic outcomes and a worsening youth mental health crisis.

#### [\*\*Capital Chatter: Oregon budget writers can’t please ‘em all\*\*](#)

*Oregon Capital Insider* | By Dick Hughes

That was evident Saturday when Ways & Means members traveled to Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham for a standing-room-only budget hearing that lasted over two hours. Around 250 people signed up to testify. Several dozen got the opportunity. Almost everyone had compelling ideas for where to spend more. Hardly anyone suggested where to spend less. Democrats control the Legislature. The Ways & Means co-chairs are Portland Democrats – Sen. Kate Lieber and Rep. Tawna Sanchez. Saturday’s audience in East Multnomah County consisted mostly of interest groups allied with Democrats. The question becomes: Who in legislative leadership will have the clout and the guts to tell their colleagues, constituents and interest groups they’re not getting all they want. Even Democratic Gov. Tina Kotek wants more for her initiatives than what Lieber and Sanchez recommended. “With all due respect to our budget co-chairs, I disagree. They do have the resources to fund the investments,” Kotek told journalists on Monday.

#### [\*\*Legal disagreement arises over Oregon farm labor housing standards\*\*](#)

*Capital Press* | By Mateusz Perkowski

A disagreement has emerged among government lawyers about whether single-family homes that farmers provide to workers fall under Oregon’s regulations for agricultural labor camps. The issue has practical implications for farmers, as the agency’s interpretation would subject virtually any housing they offer to workers to OSHA’s recently upgraded standards for labor camps, which critics say will impose unreasonable costs on employers. The Oregon Farm Bureau considers the interpretation a “significant blow to workers and employers alike,” since farmers often offer single-family homes on their property at “below market rates,” but may stop if it requires expensive remodeling.

#### [\*\*Oregon sees drop in aid-in-dying deaths, rise in prescriptions as senate considers lax bill\*\*](#)

*KOIN* | By Jashayla Pettigrew

Just as Oregon lawmakers consider more lax restrictions in medical aid for those who are dying, a [report](#) has revealed that prescriptions for life-ending prescriptions have risen while the deaths have dropped.

The Oregon Health Authority uncovered 2024 data on the Death With Dignity Act on Thursday. In its 27th year, the act led to 607 prescriptions for lethal medications and 376 aid-in-dying deaths — an 8.2% increase and a 2.6% decrease from the [year prior](#), respectively.

[\*\*Senate Bill 1003\*\*](#) would make it so physician assistants and nurse practitioners can prescribe the lethal drugs, rather than just physicians. It would also reduce the waiting period to 48 hours instead of 15 days. Proponents of the bill have noted that it would help Oregon patients in rural communities who have less access to physicians than a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. Opponents have argued the shorter wait time would hinder already-vulnerable individuals.

#### [\*\*Many Portland-area residents say they never use government services. Actually, they do\*\*](#)

*Oregon Live* | B Austin de Dios

[Oregon’s local governments](#) provide numerous types of services to their residents every day. But a new Oregonian/OregonLive poll shows that Portland-area voters might not always recognize when they’re benefitting from those offerings.

### [How officials at one Oregon sewer agency scored years of lavish trips and lots of meals: Beat Check podcast](#)

*Oregon Live | By Shane Dixon Kavanaugh*

[A recent Oregonian/OregonLive investigation](#) found that executives with Clean Water Services, Washington County's sewer agency, have spent years enjoying fancy business trips to Hawaii and meals on ratepayers' dime.

### [As Oregon ages, tax revenue may shrink](#)

*Oregon Live | By Mike Rogoway*

The economists didn't put a dollar figure on the revenue impact of the aging population but warned lawmakers that Oregon's demographic changes mean "slower growth in the decades ahead."

### [Trump administration halts millions of dollars in deliveries to Oregon food banks](#)

*OPB | By Alejandro Figueroa*

The administration halted millions of dollars worth of emergency food deliveries to food banks across the country, including Oregon, with no assurance on when it might resume the deliveries, according to Oregon Food Bank officials.

Right now, the food bank is receiving about 45 truckloads of food per month from the federal [Emergency Food Assistance Program](#), which is managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, starting next week through July, the food bank now expects to receive only about 30 truckloads per month.

That doesn't mean that food banks won't get any food from the federal government, Oliver said, but these supplemental food deliveries made up about 18% of all of the food Oregon was receiving and distributing.

### [How Oregon's laws on forcing mental health treatment could change this year](#)

*OPB | By Dirk Vanderhart*

For months, advocates, prosecutors, care providers, defense lawyers, judges and others have met extensively to hash out changes in how Oregon deals with mental illness. Faced with a public worried about a mental health crisis that has spilled increasingly into the open, people involved in those talks believe there is little doubt the Legislature will act — the question is how.

This week, lawmakers on the House Judiciary Committee are preparing to take up that question in earnest.

### [BLM rushes review of Oregon lithium project following Trump's executive order](#)

*OPB | By April Ehrlich*

The Trump administration appears to be fast-tracking an Australian company's lithium project in southeastern Oregon.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management on Wednesday published its environmental assessment of the McDermitt lithium exploration project, which has been in the works since 2022. It's giving the public until March 31 to read the 103-page assessment and [submit input](#).

### [Bill to mostly repeal mail-in voting in Oregon gets public hearing Monday afternoon](#)

*KATU | By Jeff Kirsch*

[Senate Bill 210](#) seeks to overhaul Oregon's first groundbreaking mail-in the nationwide voting system and largely return it to in-person voting.

The bill was introduced in January by **Port Orford Republican David Brock Smith**, but has generated new interest after President Donald Trump signed an executive order earlier this year.

The order requires proof of citizenship to vote and requires all ballots to be received by 8 p.m. on election day, among other things.

Smith's bill would establish in-person voting on the day of the election as standard practice. It would also require voters to present a government-issued photo ID when voting.

### [Editorial: In a hole on housing, Oregon just keeps digging](#)

### *Oregonian Editorial Board*

Oregon's first-in-the-nation statewide rent control legislation didn't chase away new housing construction after the Legislature adopted the controversial policy in 2019. But one of the biggest worries for rent-control skeptics has always been if lawmakers would leave well enough alone. The worry is merited. The law started off with a cap on annual rent increases of 7% plus inflation for buildings 15 years or older. But amid spiking inflation, legislators in 2023 added a proviso that such an increase could not exceed 10%.

But clamping down on allowable rent also squeezes the mom-and-pop operations that have long tried to keep increases down but are facing soaring insurance, utility charges, maintenance costs and property tax expenses. The likely result? [Many](#) have [testified](#) that they may end up selling to those same corporate operators or to developers eager for the underlying land – but not the manufactured homes.

[PacifiCorp involved in bills in Oregon, western states, limiting utility wildfire liability, damages](#)

*Oregon Capital Chronicle* | By Alex Baumhardt

The Oregon Legislature is expected to advance two bills this week that could provide electric utilities with a financial safety net and some level of protection from bankruptcy-inducing lawsuits if their equipment starts a catastrophic fire.

The bills bear striking resemblance to others being considered and passed by legislators in three other states, as well as controversial laws passed in Utah in 2020. PacifiCorp, owner of Pacific Power in Oregon, contributed to all of the bills and the Utah law.

[Oregon bill to pay parent caregivers advances to budget committee](#)

*InvestigateWest* | By Kaylee Tornay

A bill to make Medicaid pay available to parents for providing certain care to their minor children with severe disabilities cleared its first major hurdle in the Oregon Legislature this month, passing out of the Senate Health Care Committee with unanimous support.

It was an encouraging step forward for families and lawmakers leading the push to pass [Senate Bill 538](#), or “Tensy’s Law,” named after 10-year-old Tennyson Ross from Sherwood.

Advocates say Republican leaders have been supportive of their efforts over the years, often because the rural areas they represent face some of the most acute shortages of caregivers. This year, they hope to receive similar priority from Democratic leadership, Ross said.

**Sen. Cedric Hayden, R-Fall Creek**, co-sponsored the bill with Patterson and two other lawmakers. He criticized the state’s performance in upholding its guarantee to provide children access to their entitled care.

“Basically the state is saying, ‘Well, it will cost us more because we’re not doing our job,’” Hayden said during the Feb. 4 hearing. “They’re saying that it would increase the cost because the utilization of the authorized hours would increase. That’s what we want.”

[Advocacy group alleges Oregon hid details of foster care child’s death](#)

*OPB* | By Lauren Dake

When a 17-year-old placed in child welfare’s custody died last summer, Oregon officials investigated and issued a report. The goal of such a report is to identify systemic issues and prevent future child harm.

But in the death of Jacob, who was living in state-paid hotel when he died, Oregon’s public accounting was misleading and in some places inaccurate, [according to a report released on Thursday by the advocacy group Disability Rights Oregon](#).

The state was responsible for Jacob for the majority of his life. In 2019, Oregon Department of Human Service officials promised in a legal settlement to stop placing kids in hotels recognizing the harm it does and the risks involved. But it didn’t stop. [Instead, Oregon spent millions of dollars housing hundreds of kids in hotel rooms](#).

Leading up to Jacob’s death, DHS staff continued to look for a better placement for him than a hotel.



Staff considered civil commitment for a minor, but determined even if they managed to get a court order to force him to treatment, there was no place to go, according to the DRO report.

The report contends Oregon officials blamed other people publicly rather than contemplating its own role: from Jacob for not consenting to treatment, to his attorney, the courts and law enforcement.

#### **'You're going to need a bigger frame': Demands for state help likely to grow after federal cuts**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Randy Stapilus*

Oregon's legislative budgeters released a framework last week for state spending for the next two years. By conventional standards the budget proposal, released by Joint Ways and Means Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Kate Lieber, D-Beaverton, and Rep. Tawna Sanchez, D-Portland, was, well, conventional, and their calling it "prudent" made sense. Along with some increases for education and human services, there were limitations and even cuts in safety, transportation and other areas.

But the real, big-storm impact that could come from federal cuts or policy adjustments could make a hash of many current assumptions. Legislators should be prepared for Oregonians looking to the state as a provider and protector of last resort if Trump administration cuts and policy changes, some not yet in place or in uncertain status but strongly hinted at, come to fruition.

Like many other states, Oregon state government spends much of its revenue on education. In the 2024 fiscal year, federal agencies gave the Oregon Department of Education \$1.8 billion, and about 95% of it went to school districts. There's no telling what that amount will look like now, especially with the projected demolition of the Department of Education.

#### **Oregonians ask Legislature to let voters decide on constitutional right to healthy climate**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt*

If passed, [Senate Joint Resolution 28](#) would refer a ballot measure to Oregon voters in November to amend the state constitution so that it guarantees the "inherent, fundamental right to a clean, safe and healthy environment, including but not limited to clean air, clean water, thriving ecosystems and a stable climate system."

It would make Oregon one of four states to make such a promise to future generations in its guiding legal document and would allow Oregonians to sue the state government and its agencies if it reneges on that promise.

#### **Oregon free of drought for first time since autumn 2019**

*Statesman Journal | By Zach Urness*

Oregon is completely free of drought and abnormal dryness for the first time since November 2019, [according to the U.S. Drought Monitor](#).

#### **Oregon bill would allow out-of-state placement for foster children**

*Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo*

Lawmakers are considering a bill that would allow the Department of Human Services to place children in state custody in out-of-state facilities because there are not enough beds in Oregon to meet residential treatment demand.

Opponents say it would eliminate protections and place kids at further risk. They point to the history of Oregon officials sending [children as young as 9 years old](#) to dozens of states, including to one facility where one child died [after being restrained for throwing a sandwich](#).

Multiple claims seek more than \$345 million in damages from the state for alleged physical and sexual abuse, negligence, infliction of emotional distress, and wrongful death of children, Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin, D-Corvallis, said in testimony for [another bill](#).

#### **Oregon Senate advances bill that could stop clock change**

*Statesman Journal | By Dianne Lugo*

The Oregon Senate on Tuesday advanced a bill that could end the annual back-and-forth between daylight saving time for most of the state, if California and Washington join in adopting legislation or if Congress enacts a change.

"This bill gives us the highest possible chance of stopping the switch," said sponsoring **Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer**.

A bill introduced by Thatcher last year adopting permanent Pacific Standard Time in most of Oregon, [was killed](#) in the House after it passed by a single vote in the Senate.

Golden said his constituents agreed on two points: wanting to stop switching standard and daylight savings and being aligned with California. He said Thatcher rewrote her bill to meet those two criteria, gaining his support.

**Republican Senate Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, and Sens. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford, Noah Robinson, R-Cave Junction,** and Janeen Sollman, D-Hillsboro, also spoke in support of the bill.

Sen. Wlnsvey Campos, D-Aloha, echoed Taylor's concerns saying older Oregonians had expressed worry about being unable to go out and enjoy the full day because they are not comfortable driving in the dark.

[New bill proposes repealing vote-by-mail in Oregon, public invited to testify](#)

*KOIN | By Jenna Deml*

A public hearing on a proposed bill to repeal Oregon's standard vote-by-mail system is set to take place in Salem on Monday.

Known as [SB 210](#), the bill would end mail-in voting, require voter ID and ensure in-person voting on Election Day in the state of Oregon. But it would still retain mail-in voting for military and overseas voters, as well as those with a mailing address outside Oregon.

The hearing on the new bill, sponsored by [State Sen. David Brock Smith \(R-Port Orford\)](#), comes days after President Trump sent [a new executive order](#) calling for identity verification requirements and changing vote-by-mail deadlines.

[Portland traffic: Oregon lawmakers push for new Columbia River bridge](#)

*KOIN | BY Michaela Bourgeois*

Two Oregon state lawmakers introduced a bill on Thursday to explore the possibility of building a new bridge across the Columbia River.

**State Sen. Bruce Starr (R-Dundee) and Sen. Suzanne Weber (R-Tillamook)** introduced [Senate Bill 1201](#), which would direct the Oregon Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study to potentially build a new Columbia River bridge west of the Interstate 5 and 205 bridges.

"An additional bridge over the Columbia River connecting Washington and Columbia counties to Clark County and I-5 west of Vancouver is exactly the investment that needs a full review," stated Sen. Starr, vice-chair of the Joint Transportation Committee. "As leaders charged with developing transportation policy for the state, Senator Weber and I understand big challenges require forward thinking and addressing the future needs of our state. This bill is the first step in what will likely be a lengthy process."

"This bridge would not only ease traffic for millions of Oregonians, but it would provide a lasting, multi-generational solution that will benefit our families and economy for years to come," said Sen. Weber, who also serves on the Joint Transportation Committee.

The bill requires ODOT to complete the feasibility study and submit a report to the Joint Committee on Transportation by September 15, 2026.

[Coalition Tells Lawmakers to Keep Their Hands Off Bottle Bill](#)

*Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss*

A coalition of businesses and environmental groups interested in the Bottle Bill today urged lawmakers to abandon a proposal that would add a 5-cent surcharge to the existing 10-cent deposit collected on beverage containers.

The proposal is part of [House Bill 3940](#), which also proposes to take money from the state's Rainy Day Fund, draw on an insurance tax, and make certain adjustments to the forest harvest tax to fund wildfire prevention and response.

[Portland's Class of 2024 Graduated With Poor Readiness Rate](#)

*Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou*



Portland Public Schools released its latest student achievement numbers last week, and the results suggest a significant portion of the class of 2024 graduated without being prepared for college or the workforce.

The district's posted 84% graduation rate stood in contrast to a 69.1% post-secondary readiness rate—a measure of whether students leave high school with the skills needed for higher education or a job. High schoolers at PPS may demonstrate post-secondary readiness via six routes, which include completion of advanced courses or career technical pathways. Others may demonstrate proficiency on standardized tests like the SAT or ACT.