

Oregon News

POLITICS

Legislators consider 4% tax on car tires to fund wildlife crossings, rail, public transit

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Adding a 4% tax to the sale of new car tires in Oregon could generate up to \$20 million a year for public transit, reducing tire pollution and building wildlife crossings, according to lawmakers proposing the new tax. But ahead of its first public hearing, hundreds of Oregonians have submitted testimony in opposition, claiming they will disproportionately bear the burden of the tax.

The tax proposed in [House Bill 3362](#) would apply to new car tires for passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks, such as an Amazon delivery van. It would add about \$6 to the cost of each new tire bought by the average Oregonian.

Among those who submitted written [testimony](#) was state Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, who said the tax would unfairly penalize rural Oregonians and industries in her district in eastern Oregon.

“Unlike urban residents, many eastern Oregonians drive long distances daily for work, school, medical appointments, and essential services. Our roads are often rougher, our weather more extreme, and our livelihoods — whether in agriculture, ranching, or small business — depend on vehicles in good working condition,” she wrote. “This tax would unfairly penalize rural Oregonians, who already face higher transportation costs due to fuel expenses, vehicle maintenance and limited public transit options.”

As Motor Voter resumes, Oregon state agencies tell lawmakers they’ve fixed errors

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt

Top officials responsible for the state’s Motor Voter law appeared before lawmakers Monday with a message: As Oregon resumes automatically registering residents to vote, they have corrected errors that led to more than 1,600 possible noncitizens being added to voter rolls.

Republican lawmakers are still skeptical of the Motor Voter Program, which automatically registers people to vote when they get a new driver’s license. In recent months they have argued the program should receive far more oversight or be scrapped altogether.

Under state law, such automatic registrations are only supposed to proceed if a person offers proof of U.S. citizenship while getting a license. But a review that began last year found that didn’t always happen. In some cases, people were registered without their knowledge after they showed a foreign passport.

And DMV officials say they took several steps to ensure such staff errors won’t happen. They include altering an agency computer program to make it far more difficult to mistakenly indicate a person offered proof of U.S. citizenship and a requirement that supervisors double check the work of employees.

ODOT has been analyzing samples of new DMV transactions monthly, and recent reports have shown no new errors after those protocols were put in place.

But while officials believe they have corrected the issue, they acknowledge they need to win public trust in the system.

Oregon bill would require companies to include pay ranges in job listings

Oregon Live | By Matthew Kish

Oregon lawmakers are again considering a bill that would require employers to include wage information in job postings after shelving similar legislation two years ago.

Backers say [House Bill 2746](#), which had its first hearing before lawmakers Monday, would close gender and racial wage gaps and save time in the hiring process, but opponents say the state already has strong pay-equity laws and the bill would add another layer of regulation.

The organization [estimates women in Oregon](#) make \$403,480 less than men over a 40-year career. The gap is even greater for women of color. Backers say pay transparency would help close the gaps by

making it harder for businesses to discriminate and easier for employees to negotiate more equitable compensation.

While some states exempt small businesses from their laws that require posting pay ranges, the Oregon bill would apply to all Oregon companies. It also would require that employers maintain specific records for each employee.

[Trump orders on gender-affirming care in Oregon blocked by judge](#)

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

A federal judge late Friday [extended an order blocking President Donald Trump's administration](#) from withholding federal funding from medical providers in Oregon and three other states that provide gender-affirming care to transgender youth under 19.

[Near-capacity Multnomah County jails 'risk to community safety'](#)

KOIN | By Joelle Jones

Could Multnomah County's overcrowded and understaffed jails prompt officials to release inmates? It's a harsh reality actively being explored by county officials.

Still, Vasquez claims the crux of the problem is not a lack of jail beds, but a lack of resources.

[Singleton Mines County Budget, Finds Millions in Metro Money Outside of Homelessness Department](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

Singleton says she found \$22 million in the proposed budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, that could be clawed back to JOHS. The figure is larger for the current fiscal year: \$36 million.

Combined with \$34 million in reserve dollars, the recovered money could cut the deficit at JOHS from \$104 million, the figure announced by County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson at a hastily called press conference last month, to \$48 million.

Multnomah County broke no rules by sending SHS money to departments beyond the JOHS. Yet the discovery by Singleton is significant because it suggests county leaders haven't considered a consolidation of SHS funds to bolster the JOHS. It also demonstrates the county's board of commissioners is no longer showing complete deference to Vega Pederson's budget.

Among the JOHS-eligible funds in the fiscal 2026 forecast that Singleton found: \$12.7 million earmarked for the county Health Department to use for its own shelter and housing projects; \$1.9 million for adult addiction services; and \$1.9 million for the Behavioral Health Resource Center, the downtown day center and shelter for adults who have mental health or addiction challenges and also live outside. The Department of Community Justice is slated to get \$2.4 million.

"I'm not saying these aren't good programs, Singleton said, "but they don't need to be funded by SHS."

[How long does Gov. Tina Kotek's office take to release public records? Staff don't know](#)

Oregon Live | By Hillary Borrud

Oregon's public records law requires governments to release records "as soon as practicable and without unreasonable delay." The law says governments should take no longer than 15 business days to answer most public records requests -- either by providing the documents or offering a timeline for when they'll be available, responding that they don't exist or saying they can't be released because of a legal exemption.

How long does it take Kotek's office to release records in response to requests from citizens, journalists and other members of the public? Officials say they don't know.

"The office does not track this," spokesperson Lucas Bezerra wrote in an email.

By reviewing an online log of requests the governor's office receives and contacting the people who filed them, The Oregonian/OregonLive found that it's not uncommon for requests to drag out for months.

[Oregon bill that would remove hurdles to medically assisted suicide runs into wall of opposition](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A bill that would remove some of the hurdles for terminally ill people to die under Oregon's 1997 [Death with Dignity Act](#) faced significant opposition during a legislative hearing Monday, with some people who

testified saying it would further promote a “culture of death over life” and allow “death on demand within 48 hours.”

The bill would loosen Oregon’s first-in-the-nation law by reducing the standard waiting period after patients ask for lethal doses of medication from 15 days to two days. Among other provisions, it would eliminate the need for two doctors to sign off on medically assisted suicide and instead allow two physician assistants or nurse practitioners to do so.

EDUCATION

[Portland Public Schools Significantly Reduces Summer Catch-Up Program](#)

Willamette Week | By Joanna Hou

Portland Public Schools will significantly reduce its Summer Acceleration Academy this upcoming summer, limiting both the schools and grade levels that it serves.

The SAA is a summer learning program that targets children who are performing below grade level and helps them catch up before the next school year. First launched in the summer of 2021, the program has shrunk in size and scope as dollars have dwindled.

Last summer, it served K–5 students at 67 schools in kindergarten through second grade, says Darcy Soto, PPS’s director of learning acceleration. This year, it will serve students from only 18 schools, specifically providing early literacy intervention.

Soto says the reduction was influenced by the district’s ongoing budget crunch, including a \$40 million deficit for the upcoming 2025–26 school year. But she and PPS also cite a lack of state funding. Last year, Soto says the district was able to allocate \$4.5 million to summer learning because of federal relief dollars. This year, the district will work with \$1.6 million.

[Lawmakers consider ‘Freedom to Read’ bill as latest attempt to limit book bans in Oregon schools](#)

OPB | By Natalie Pate

This time last year, Oregon lawmakers came tantalizingly close to passing Senate Bill 1583 [before it died last minute](#).

The 2024 bill would have blocked school boards and other school officials from removing or refusing to offer library books or textbooks simply because they contain the perspective of, or are written by, members of protected classes, such as people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals or religious minorities. This year, [Senate Bill 1098](#) is picking up the torch.

What proponents are calling the “Freedom to Read” bill would prohibit book bans and other forms of censorship in Oregon public schools if the attempt constitutes discrimination. That means a book couldn’t be banned based on race, national origin, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical or mental disability, military status, or marital or family status. The bill had its [first hearing](#) Monday morning.

[Oregon bill to lower voting age to 16 for school board elections draws heated testimony](#)

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

A bill to allow 16- and 17-year-old Oregonians to vote in school board elections drew passionate testimony Monday, with supporters saying teens younger than 18 are eager to have a say in issues directly affecting their education and opponents arguing they’re just too immature to vote.

[House Bill 3012](#) has gained tremendous support from students, teachers and even school board members. The supporters include the 38,000-member educators’ union, the Oregon Education Association, and Common Cause, which advocates for accountability in government.

[US Department of Education opens investigation into Tumwater School District](#)

OPB | By Sami West

The U.S. Department of Education has launched a Title IX investigation into the Tumwater School District after a transgender girl from Shelton played in a high school girls’ basketball game last month.

HOUSING

[Oregon Gov. Kotek, housing advocates push for more options, fewer regulations](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway

The new proposal would bar cities and counties from blocking development of some types of middle-density housing, including duplexes or accessory dwelling units, on any land where a single-family home can be built. It also would prevent cities from requiring traffic studies or forcing developers to pay for expensive projects like a new stoplight when they're building or redeveloping a lot. It would provide incentives for developers to build affordable homes and homes accessible for people with disabilities. "This bill is about choice," Kotek said during a press conference ahead of the bill's hearing. "It's about affordability. When we can build more kinds of homes, people have more options."

[Governor Kotek to address housing density bill at press conference Monday](#)

KATU | By Vasili Varlamos

Gov. Tina Kotek held a press conference on Monday ahead of a public hearing on a new bill to increase housing density and streamline development processes in Oregon.

The proposed legislation, [HB 2138](#), was first introduced on Jan. 13. It seeks to promote the construction of denser and more affordable housing within the state's cities by cutting through bureaucratic red tape that often delays construction and development projects.

The bill mandates that local governments permit middle housing in all residentially zoned areas and extends these requirements to urban unincorporated lands.

The bill would also reform land division rules. It would simplify the process for expedited land divisions by requiring local governments to approve applications within 120 days. The bill would also allow developers to bypass some traffic studies, which can often delay new housing projects.

[Oregon governor wants to see thousands more duplexes and townhomes built](#)

OPB | By Lauren Dake

The latest measure, House Bill 2138, builds on a bill from 2019 that the governor pushed for when she was speaker of the statehouse. That measure, [House Bill 2001, which drew national headlines](#) at the time, legalized duplexes on single-family lots in cities with a population of 10,000 people and got rid of single-family zoning restrictions in cities with a population greater than 25,000 people.

Years later, the governor said her initial bill didn't go far enough. Now, she wants to remove any single-family housing zoning requirements across Oregon, as long as the land is inside an existing urban growth boundary.

In her first year of office, Kotek set a goal of adding 36,000 new housing units a year. She hasn't met that goal. Kotek is also hoping to create a statewide homeless shelter system and calling on lawmakers to funnel more than \$200 million toward the effort.

Some of the requirements the governor's bill suggests loosening for developers include eliminating the notice and appeal requirements for middle housing developments and eliminating traffic impact analyses for infill projects.

[Oregon Gov. Kotek touts bill to build more housing across state](#)

KOIN | By Lisa Balick

Oregon needs to build almost 30,000 homes a year to make up for its housing shortage, according to the state's chief economist. Kotek said this bill will help.

There is criticism the measure would take away some local control by cities and counties, such as banning traffic impact studies. Kotek dismissed that.

[Manufactured home park residents pray for relief as lawmakers aim at rent](#)

OPB | By Erik Neumann

Manufactured home parks have undergone a national trend in recent years, shifting from the hands of small landlords to real estate investment trusts or owners who buy up numerous parks and increase rents. The tenants of those parks, often seniors living on fixed incomes, are left with little choice but to

pay because in Southwest Washington — as with many areas in the Northwest — affordable housing is increasingly hard to find.

While the typical renter in an apartment or house can look for a new place to live if costs increase too much, manufactured home owners have few options. Despite being called mobile homes, they're essentially permanent and have to be sold before their owner can move. But with a shortage of affordable housing in Southwest Washington, many seniors are effectively trapped.

TARIFFS

[As tariffs take hold, here's a summary of Oregon's biggest imports and exports](#)

OPB / By Kyra Buckley

Oregon imported more than \$28 billion worth of goods from other countries last year, mainly from Japan and Taiwan, as well as from two of the countries affected by the tariffs: Canada and China.

Top among Oregon's exports *and* imports are computer chips and the components to help design and build them. The semiconductor industry employs more than 30,000 Oregonians, and some of the world's biggest computer chip firms have a significant presence in the state.

[Listen: How Oregon businesses are planning to respond to tariffs](#)

OPB

On March 4, the U.S. imposed 25% tariffs on imported goods from Canada and Mexico, the nation's largest trading partners. China was also hit with an additional 10% hike on its goods entering the U.S.

[U.S. stock market plunge as Trump's tariffs spark fears about a trade war](#)

OPB / By Maria Aspan

The Dow fell 1.8%, or more than 770 points in mid-morning trading on Tuesday. The Nasdaq and S&P 500 also dropped more than 1.5%. The price of bitcoin fell below \$83,000, shedding all of its gains from a weekend rally after Trump said he would create a U.S. "[strategic reserve](#)" of cryptocurrencies, including Bitcoin.

Canada, Mexico, and China are the country's three largest trading partners. The escalating trade war is likely to result in consumers paying higher prices for a wide range of products, including fruits and vegetables, flat-screen TVs, and auto parts.

[US tariffs on Canada and Mexico take effect; China, Mexico and Canada retaliate](#)

OPB

[Beijing retaliated](#) with tariffs of up to 15% on a wide array of U.S. farm exports. It also expanded the number of U.S. companies subject to export controls and other restrictions by about two dozen.

Sheinbaum said she will announce the products Mexico will target on Sunday in a public event in Mexico City's central plaza, perhaps with the delay indicating Mexico still hopes to de-escalate the trade war set off by Trump.

U.S. markets [dropped sharply Monday](#) after Trump said there was "no room left" for negotiations that could lower the tariffs. Shares were mostly lower Tuesday after they took effect.

The tariffs may be short-lived if the U.S. economy suffers. But Trump could also impose more tariffs on the European Union, India, computer chips, autos and pharmaceutical drugs. The American president has injected a disorienting volatility into the world economy, leaving it off balance as people wonder what he will do next.