

Oregon News

POLITICS

Oregon drivers buy millions of tires every year. A controversial bill could create a tax on each one

Oregon Live | By Carlos Fuentes

"A small business can't necessarily absorb extra costs like that, and instead that just turns around and gets placed onto the purchaser," Hastings said. "Realistically, that means that prices on tires are just going to go up 4% in the state of Oregon."

Democrats supporting the bill say the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. A quarter of the revenue would fund efforts to build highway crossings for wildlife to minimize car crashes involving animals. The remaining revenue would support programs to expand rail and public transit service in the state as well as efforts to reduce water pollution from illegally discarded tires.

The bill has incensed Republican lawmakers and business groups, who frequently fight any proposal to create or raise taxes. Republican caucus leaders have pushed their constituents to rally against the proposal, prompting more than 1,000 submissions of written testimony, nearly all opposed to the bill. An initial public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for Tuesday evening.

Sen. Bruce Starr, a Republican from Dundee who has been tapped by Democrats to oversee the [accountability portion](#) of the package, criticized the proposed tire tax for failing to help close that funding gap. He also claimed, in a newsletter sent Friday, that the bill would not deliver positive environmental benefits.

The State's Largest Union Wants to Assist Caregivers—and Grow Its Own Ranks

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

Service Employees International Union unveiled an audacious strategy Feb. 27 in the form of a bill that would shift the balance of power in an industry that provides care for some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens.

The state's largest public-sector union, SEIU represents 72,000 workers and spends millions every election cycle to support Democratic candidates. On Feb. 27, leading Democratic lawmakers introduced a bill on SEIU's behalf that the union calls a "top priority."

Senate Bill 1138 would create a board to oversee working conditions in the direct care industry and give that board extraordinary authority. The board, appointed by the governor and led by an executive director, would set pay and staffing standards for the roughly 60,000 people who provide care to seniors and developmentally disabled Oregonians. Nearly all the pay for those workers comes from Medicaid money, a mix of federal and state dollars allocated by the Legislature.

As an example of SEIU's clout with the Democratic supermajorities it helped get elected to the Legislature, SB 1138's sponsors include Senate President Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego) and House Speaker Julie Fahey (D-Eugene), along with their respective majority leaders. That means it has an excellent chance of passing.

The union imagines a twofold benefit from the proposed legislation: improving the lot of a critical workforce and expanding SEIU's membership and, by extension, its influence.

Oregon lawmakers once again attempt to end daylight saving time

Oregon Live | By Aimee Green

But any potential action by state lawmakers will be postponed for at least an extra year after a daylight saving time bill before the Washington Legislature [died in committee](#) last month.

The postponement is unavoidable because any legislation that Oregon passes to "ditch the switch" only will go into effect if both Washington and California also agree to do so.

"How many times have you heard 'Haven't we dealt with this issue? Didn't we deal with this like five years ago?'" [Sen. Kim Thatcher](#), a Keizer Republican, told [a Senate committee](#) Tuesday. "'No.' Because we were waiting for approval from Congress."

Thatcher is referring to [a 2019 bill approved by the Legislature](#) to make daylight saving time permanent. That bill can't go into effect unless Congress approves the move.

So now, after at least a decade of introducing bills to either end daylight saving time or standard time in 2015, 2019, 2023 and 2024, Thatcher has introduced [Senate Bill 566](#) and [Senate Bill 1038](#). They call for Oregon to adopt permanent standard time, which it can do without congressional approval.

"Standard time, we can change it but we're kind of chicken to do it ourselves," Thatcher said. "So we're saying if Washington and California do it, we'll do it."

One of Thatcher's bills also says Oregon can switch to permanent daylight saving time — and the 9 p.m. summer sunsets — if that's what Congress allows. In a nutshell, Thatcher just wants an end to the hourly time changes.

[Sen. Dick Anderson](#), a Lincoln City Republican, told the committee that he supports Oregon moving to permanent standard time, and that it's important to stop toying with people's sleep schedules.

"Who here in this room hasn't changed their clocks back since November?" Anderson asked. "Good news, on Sunday this week you'll be accurate again. The bad news: You will lose an hour of sleep."

Summing up the sentiments of many, Anderson added: "This is a twice yearly task that everyone despises."

Thatcher's bills would affect all of Oregon except for the sliver in the eastern part that is on Mountain time.

[Trump boasts 'America's momentum is back' in address to Congress as Dems protest, boycott](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Jennifer Shutt, Ariana Figueroa

President Donald Trump touted his administration's accomplishments after just 43 days in office and the need for billions in federal funds to enact his campaign promise of mass deportations during his first address to a joint session of Congress since returning to the White House.

[Reliance on One-Time Funds, Discouraged by Policy, Widened Homeless Budget Gap](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

How did Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services, run in coordination with the city of Portland, blow a \$104 million hole in its budget for the 2026 fiscal year?

The county's budget for the current fiscal year has a page describing fiscally responsible restrictions on the use of one-time funds—windfalls that come from federal emergency funding, the sale of capital assets, taxes that exceed budgeted revenue, and "carryover funds" unspent from the previous year.

"Unrestricted one-time-only resources present organizations with temptations that are hard to resist," the budget reads. "In the short run it appears more beneficial to allocate such resources to the highest priority public service that would otherwise be unfunded than to restrict them to costs associated with one-time needs and those that will not recur in following years. However, the result of this practice is to expand operational levels and public expectations beyond the capacity of the organization to generate continuing funding."

[Oregon could become the latest state to ban underage marriage](#)

OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt

By one estimate, an Oregonian under the age of 18 gets married roughly every other day on average. A bill to bar that from happening is on the move in the Legislature this year.

Senate Bill 548 would add Oregon to a growing number of states that prohibit minors from being married — even with a parent's permission. Currently, Oregon allows 17-year-olds to be married as long as a guardian says it's OK. Many other states allow even younger people to walk down the aisle.

Based on state data, Powell's organization [estimates](#) that more than 3,600 minors were married in Oregon between 2000 and 2021 — and that 83% of them were girls marrying men roughly four years older. That would amount to about 177 minors married in the state each year.

[Oregon businesses feel the pressure of rising egg costs](#)

OPB | By Crystal Ligor

Across the country, egg prices have been steadily rising, with a [15% jump in price last month alone](#). Since 2022, avian flu has been sweeping through chicken flocks and has only gotten worse in the last few months. USDA data shows from December through February, more than 54 million birds have been affected. In Oregon, bird flu numbers are still relatively low, but that doesn't mean we're immune to the ripple effects. Many consumers are seeing egg prices far above the [\\$4.95 national average](#) per dozen, and Oregon businesses who use a lot of eggs — diners, bakeries and custard shops — are also feeling the pinch. Some are trying to pivot to offer egg-free dishes, while others are passing the cost on to consumers.

[Oregon federal buildings going up for sale, according to government list](#)

OPB / By Kyra Buckley, Rob Manning

The Trump administration intends to put 10 federal buildings up for sale in Oregon, according to the U.S. General Services Administration. They're among hundreds of federal properties across the country "designated for disposal."

The list includes three buildings in Portland, including the Bonneville Power Administration building on Northeast 11th Avenue. Bonneville Power is a self-funded federal agency that manages the majority of the Pacific Northwest's power grid. It was [recently targeted for layoffs](#), which were [partially reversed](#).

['Get the Junk out of our Rates' bill could limit how Oregon utilities pay for lobbying, ads](#)

OPB / By Monica Samayoa

A bill that aims to ensure Oregon ratepayers are not paying for utilities' lobbying and advertising expenses could provide transparency and some relief from high energy bills for Oregon ratepayers. On Monday, the state Senate Committee on Energy and Environment heard Senate Bill 88, labeled the "Get the Junk out of our Rates" bill by advocates.

The bill would essentially create more clarity around utility spending, and when it must come out of those allowed profits. If they spend on advertising, political influence, litigation, or pay for trade associations or membership fees and fines, that spending would not be allowed to push up rates — it would have to be taken from profits instead.

Senate Bill 88 comes at a time when many Oregonians are paying 50% more on their energy bills than they did five years ago. Though lawmakers say the legislation would not provide much relief on energy bills, it would create more transparency.

[Advocates, scientists ask lawmakers for \\$1 million to stop toxic algal blooms on Willamette River](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle / By Alex Baumhardt

Just about every summer in recent years, a stretch of the Willamette River south of downtown Portland at Ross Island turns green from a thick layer of toxin-producing algae that grows rapidly in the hot and stagnant waters of the Ross Island Lagoon.

As the thick algal blooms are carried out by winds and tides to the mainstem of the river, it can become, for days on end, unhealthy for humans, pets and aquatic life.

There's an easy fix that's been years in the making, according to Willie Levenson, founder of the Portland-based nonprofit Human Access Project. Standing in the way is the last \$1 million he and river engineers at Oregon State University need to finish designing it.

[House Bill 3314](#), sponsored by state Reps. Rob Nosse and Mark Gamba, Democrats from Portland and Milwaukie, would direct about \$1 million to Oregon State University to finish designing a channel that would cut through Ross Island.

[Oregon's High Testing Opt-Out Rates Aren't An Excuse for Poor Student Outcomes](#)

Willamette Week / By Joanna Hou

In 2015, then-Gov. Kate Brown signed House Bill 2655, which requires districts to send out notices to parents and allow them to opt their children out of state exams. For years since, Oregon has not hit the federally mandated 95% testing opt-in rate.

But this legislative cycle—amid a push from Gov. Tina Kotek for school funding to be paired with accountability—those opt-outs have been magnified.

Oregon's outcomes are dismal, and education experts who spoke to *WW* say high opt-out rates aren't an excuse for low achievement. But they might have other consequences.

"There's no question Oregon's opt-out policy poses a real challenge to building an effective and trusted K–12 improvement plan and accountability system," says Louis Wheatley, a spokesman for education accountability nonprofit Foundations for a Better Oregon.

[**Metro homeless services tax money could flow directly to cities under proposed change**](#)

Oregon Live | By Lillian Mongeau Hughes

Right now, most of the revenue raised by the homeless services tax on businesses and high-income individuals goes to Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties, which offer the majority of outreach, shelter, rent assistance and other homeless services provided in the region. Metro reserves 5% of the annual net tax revenue in an administrative account. Under the proposed ordinance, it is from unspent funds in that administrative account that Metro would pull money to distribute to cities.

[**Trump job cuts upend lives of federal workers in Oregon. Here are some impacts**](#)

Oregon Live | By Yesenia Amaro

While the full scope of cuts in Oregon is not yet known, the impacts on workers who have lost their jobs and what the job losses will mean for Oregonians are slowly coming into focus – with the potential to disrupt services for veterans, jeopardize assistance for farmers and ranchers, and [strain oversight](#) of the region's energy grid, among other things.

About 29,700 federal employees worked in Oregon as of last spring, representing about 1.5% of all employees statewide, which is among the lowest rates in the country, federal data shows. It's unclear how many have voluntarily left their jobs or been forced out, although Oregon had about 4,700 federal workers who were still in probationary periods last August.