

## **Oregon News**

### **POLITICS**

#### **[OR Sen. Cedric Hayden proposes change to sex offender laws after KATU Investigation](#)**

*KATU | By Wright Gazaway*

An Oregon lawmaker proposed changes to the state's sex offender classification process following a KATU investigation into unclassified sex offenders.

Our reporting found a level 3 sex offender in New York moved to Oregon but remained unclassified at the time of our investigation. That means the state does not know his risk of re-offending.

**Fall Creek Republican Senator Cedric Hayden** sponsored legislation that would require Oregon's Parole Board to accept classification levels from other states and classify the offender into the most comparable level in Oregon's system. The law also provides an avenue for offenders to appeal their classification. Right now, the parole board reclassifies people who move into Oregon; agency leaders said that's one reason the state can't finish the backlog of unclassified sex offenders by the current deadline of December 1, 2026.

House Minority Leader Christine Drazan also sponsored legislation that allows victims to be involved in the classification process and provides an opportunity for them to request reclassification for offenders. Meanwhile, the parole board has its own ideas to address the backlog. If the legislature accepts the changes, the parole board would only need to classify people in the backlog who are under 35 next January or people with multiple sex crime convictions. The parole board said the backlog would be reduced to roughly 3,700 offenders if the legislation passes.

#### **[Rep. Drazan, rape survivors propose changes to OR's sex offender classification process](#)**

*KATU | By Wright Gazaway*

House Minority Leader Christine Drazan and sex assault survivors rallied at the Capitol Thursday in support of changes to Oregon's sex offender classification process.

Drazan, a Canby Republican, sponsored House Bill 3873. Among many changes, it expands the state's definition of victim and includes people in cases where an offender admitted to the crime but was not convicted.

The legislation also gives victims a voice in the sex offender classification process and sets up a task force to look at the system in Oregon.

There is no stated opposition to the legislation. However, the Oregon Parole Board – the agency responsible for classifying sex offenders in Oregon – is supporting three bills that reduce the number of unclassified sex offenders the agency needs to classify, remove the deadline to clear the backlog of unclassified sex offenders, and allow the agency to classify some sex offenders through an administrative process.

The agency said there are currently about 12,500 unclassified sex offenders living, working, or going to school in Oregon.

#### **[Lawmakers advance bill that would allow striking workers to collect unemployment benefits](#)**

*Oregon Live | By Sami Edge*

After five public meetings, hours of testimony and hundreds of letters in support and opposition, lawmakers on Thursday voted to [advance a bill](#) that would [allow striking workers](#) to collect unemployment benefits.

Senators advanced the bill out of committee on a party line vote, with the three Democrats in favor and two Republicans opposed. **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham** said he intends to issue a minority report, an alternate proposal that lawmakers can put forward when they disagree with the bill.

Bonham, of The Dalles, and **Sen. Cedric Hayden, of Fall Creek**, raised concerns that the bill could make it more likely for workers to strike, and in turn drive up the tax rate for employers who pay into the state's unemployment insurance fund through payroll taxes.

**Hayden** said he wasn't convinced that the bill wouldn't affect the payroll tax in the long run. He said he's also heard concern from cities who as public employers have to repay the unemployment fund for money given to their striking workers.

"This has been a big topic for small municipalities that are struggling to make ends meet," **Hayden** said. "The dollar-for-dollar payback could really put them in a tough position."

Sen. Kathleen Taylor, a Portland Democrat who sponsored the bill and chairs the committee, put [forward an amendment](#) intended to address some employer concerns. The amendment, also approved on a party-line vote, says that if an employee receives back-pay for the time they were striking they will have to repay the unemployment benefits they received. It also defines strikes or labor disputes that qualify under the bill and requires that striking workers wait two weeks before they qualify for unemployment. Nurse Becky Routson argued that providing unemployment benefits to striking workers is an affront to equity, when only 16% of Oregon [workers belonged to unions](#) in 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

#### [Bill to grant striking Oregon workers unemployment checks moves forward](#)

*OPB | By Dirk Vanderhardt*

Public employers, business groups and Republican lawmakers believe the bill will lead to more frequent strikes. They say that could pose extra costs for cities, school districts and other public employers — which reimburse the state's \$6.4 billion Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund for every dollar paid to former employees.

"This is just one more of many cuts that will cost small businesses," said **state Sen. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**. "This will have a negative impact on our school districts. Absolutely it will. There's no question about it. This will have a negative impact on our health system."

#### [Days left to submit appeal for wildfire hazard map](#)

*KDVR | By Liv Collom*

A public town hall meeting is being held in White City on Mar. 8 calling for the repeal of the statewide wildfire hazard map.

The meeting is taking place on the last weekend before the appeals deadline of Mar. 10. Bob Hart, a retired land consultant, will be presenting. **Sen. Noah Robinson (R - District 2)**, Rep. Emily McIntire (R - District 56) and Jackson County Commissioner Colleen Roberts will attend the meeting.

Senator *Robinson* has stated that the issue is urgent, as property owners are facing difficult decisions about their ability to remain on their property. "We need to repeal these maps and all the attached laws, now."

#### [Oregon Lawmakers Introduce the 'Blue Economy Bill' to Advance Ocean and Coastal Science](#)

*EIN Presswire*

Two Oregon lawmakers introduced House Bill 3786 that will provide the science and information needed to support a healthy ocean and vibrant coastal economies. The "Blue Economy Bill" introduced by Representative David Gomberg and **Senator Dick Anderson** declares a state of emergency and provides \$3 million to Oregon's Ocean Science Fund for the Oregon Ocean Science Trust to host competitive ocean and coastal science and monitoring grants.

#### [Gov. Kotek, Mayor Wilson join forces to increase apartment construction in Portland](#)

*OPB | By Alex Zielinski*

Portland leaders and the Oregon governor's office have teamed up with the private sector to tackle the city's housing crisis. Mayor Keith Wilson and Gov. Tina Kotek convened a meeting Thursday with housing developers, construction firms and other city officials to float solutions to the city's slow pace of housing development.

The group is focused specifically on market-rate apartment construction. According to Wilson and Kotek, their work will target changes to permitting and zoning policies that would speed up construction.

## **'POWER Act' bill would require Oregon's large energy users like data centers pay fair share of energy use**

*OPB | By Monica Samayoa*

Oregon lawmakers are considering a bill that would require certain large energy users, like data centers and cryptocurrency businesses, to pay their share for electricity use. Advocates say it could help bring down energy bills for residential ratepayers who have taken on more than their share of the cost of substantial energy use by these entities in recent years.

But a trillion-dollar corporation that owns data centers in Oregon says the bill should be expanded to all large energy users. Officials from that company — Google — suggested changes to the bill, and said they are willing to collaborate with lawmakers.

On Thursday, lawmakers from the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment held a public hearing for [House Bill 3546, or the POWER Act](#) — short for “Protecting Oregonians With Energy Responsibility.” The bill would create a new classification for data centers, cryptocurrency and other large industrial energy users using more than 20 megawatts, or 20 million watts of power.

## **Oregon insiders: Who's who in and around state government**

*Oregon Capital Insider | By Dick Hughes*

The Oregon Republican Party elected new leaders: chair, Jerry Cummings; vice chair, Connie Whelchel; secretary, Sheri Brady; and treasurer, Glenn Miller.

## **Judge orders Oregon Firearms Federation to pay \$60K to lawyer hired to challenge gun control Measure 114**

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

A judge has ruled that the Oregon Firearms Federation owes attorney John Kaempf more than \$66,000 in unpaid legal fees plus interest for [his representation of the group](#) in its initial federal challenge of gun control Measure 114.

The federation paid a \$60,000 retainer but failed to pay another \$66,161.82 bill issued Dec. 15, 2022, for additional work, according to Kaempf.

## **Deschutes County dissolved its DEIA committee without hearing public opinions. Officials got an earful anyway**

*OPB | By Kathryn Styer Martinez*

Deschutes County residents continued to email and call in the weeks after county commissioners voted to terminate a staff-led, internal work group focused on promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and access. Board Chair Tony DeBone didn't allow public comment or staff input on the item during the Feb. 5 meeting.

## **Oregon Treasurer Steiner, other Democrats warn tariffs would lead to price hikes, uncertainty**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Julia Shumway*

Oregon Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner and other Democratic treasurers from around the country warned Thursday that President Donald Trump's now-paused tariffs would lead to unaffordable price hikes for Americans and uncertainty for businesses.

## **'OPB Politics Now': Why Portland and Multnomah County's budgets are so bleak but Oregon's is stable**

*OPB*

On the latest episode of OPB Politics Now we discuss the challenging budget cycle facing two of the state's largest governments — and why the situation for [state government is vastly different](#).

## **Three US soldiers from Pacific NW accused of sharing classified military information with China**

*Oregon Live | By Maxine Bernstein*

Three U.S. Army soldiers are accused of sharing top secret national defense material and other sensitive military information with a Chinese national and other unidentified buyers in China, according to unsealed court records.

## **'Tens of thousands' in damage in overnight shooting at Tigard Tesla dealership, police say**

*Oregon Live | By Zane Sparling*

A [possibly politically motivated shooting](#) inflicted tens of thousands of dollars in damages to an unoccupied Tesla dealership in Tigard, police say.

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

### **[Trump, again, walks back tariffs in trade war with Canada and Mexico](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Ariana Figueroa*

President Donald Trump Thursday signed an executive order to delay for a month broad tariffs he levied on Canada and Mexico earlier in the week.

During the signing at the White House, Trump said most of the 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada he placed beginning Tuesday would be delayed until April 2. Trump had also placed an additional 10% tariff on China.

### **[Oregon federal lawmakers urge rehiring workers that track water, snowpack](#)**

*Statesman Journal | By Zach Urness*

A bipartisan group of Oregon lawmakers urged the rehiring of federal employees that track the state's snowpack and water supply, saying they provide "critical services that benefit Oregonians across all communities and all sectors."

Eighteen members of [Oregon's Legislative Water Caucus](#), including rural Republicans and urban Democrats, asked that all members of the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), based in Portland, have their jobs restored in a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins and Oregon's congressional delegation.

### **[Cuts to NIH medical research funding paused after Oregon lawsuit](#)**

*Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason*

A federal judge on Wednesday paused cuts to health funding nationwide in response to [a lawsuit](#) filed by Oregon and 21 other states against the Trump administration. Universities and Democratic-led states warned the cuts would lead to layoffs, lab closures and a curtailment of scientific and medical studies. The cuts would save more than \$4 billion per year, the National Institutes of Health [said in a post on X](#). The post also said that of \$35 billion in grants distributed by NIH last year, \$9 billion went to indirect costs.

### **[Oregon's attorney general sues to get fired federal employees reinstated](#)**

*KATU*

Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield has filed a lawsuit to reinstate federal employees in Oregon who lost their jobs.

He is one of 20 attorneys general across the nation filing suit. They accuse the Trump administration of trying to illegally downsize the federal government.

### **[State-by-state report by Dems projects millions of people could lose Medicaid coverage](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Jennifer Shutt*

The Oregon Health Plan, the state's Medicaid program, covers more than 1.4 million people in Oregon. That's about a quarter of the state's population. The report released by congressional Democrats estimates that 57,000 rural residents and 110,000 children could lose their health coverage, and that nearly one in five seniors would lose nursing home care. In all, more than 460,000 Oregonians could lose coverage, according to the report.

### **[Electric vehicle industry will persist, experts say, despite Trump funding cuts](#)**

*Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Paige Gross*

But on his first day in office, Trump signed an executive order repealing the incorrectly labeled "electric vehicle mandate" by the Biden administration, instead promoting "consumer choice" around electric vehicles. In the executive order, he also aims to eliminate subsidies, and some state emissions waivers, [like California's](#).

Last month, Trump also [paused a \\$3 billion project](#) to expand the network of electric vehicle charging stations. The actions are similar to ones he took his first time in office, rolling back emission standards set by President Barack Obama.

Hybrid and battery-powered vehicles accounted for 19% of new vehicle sales by mid-2024, and electric-only vehicles were 7% of total new car sales, the [U.S. Energy Information Administration](#) reported.

Electric vehicles made up a much larger share of luxury vehicle sales, with 33% of sales, and the average price of a battery-powered electric vehicle sitting at \$56,371 in the summer 2024.

#### **'They just gutted it': Latest Trump job cuts in Oregon hit agency managing real estate**

*Oregon Live / By Ted Sickinger*

In the [latest job cuts to hit Oregon under the Trump administration](#), federal officials this week fired the vast majority of employees who manage real estate and provide services to federally owned buildings in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

#### **Bonneville Power Administration offers jobs back to staff fired by Trump administration**

*OPB / By Courtney Sherwood*

Three people familiar with internal operations at BPA confirmed that 89 staff who'd been fired are receiving emails or letters asking them to return to work. About 35 were already [hired back in mid-February](#).

Even after rescinding those terminations, the agency is still down hundreds of positions, after 240 resigned in exchange for a buyout offer and 90 people who received job offers had those offers canceled.