

# Lawmakers focus on carbon 'cap and invest'

Fire management is also on docket

CONNOR RADNOVICH AND TRACY LOEW  
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon legislators return to Salem for three days of committee meetings next week as they gear up for the 2018 session.

The topics, including Medicaid overpayments and oil train safety, are a good preview of the session's hot issues.

Perhaps hottest of all: An attempt to curb Oregon's carbon emissions by creating a "cap and invest" program.

The program would put a collective cap on greenhouse gas emissions statewide, then auction off allowances to emit those gases. Businesses could sell or trade allowances but eventually might find it cheaper to invest in carbon reduction technology.

Backers say it could bring about \$700 million in new revenue to the state, which would then be invested in further greenhouse gas reductions.

Lawmakers have been working for years to find just the right vehicle to make the program work for Oregon and to gain the support of business leaders who have opposed previous attempts to put a price on carbon.

Opponents argue that Oregon's emissions make up a small fraction of those worldwide, and that capping emissions would put Oregon businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, introduced Senate Bill 1070, the "Clean Energy Jobs" bill, in the waning days of the 2017 session, but it didn't pass. Dembrow, along with Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, then convened work groups that have since been meeting to hash out more details.

On Monday, the Senate Interim Environment and Natural Resources and the House Interim Energy and Environment committees will meet jointly to hear reports from the work groups.

The meeting begins at 8 a.m. in Hearing Room F. Here are other issues to watch for:

## Medicaid overpayment

Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen will testify Monday before the Senate Interim Committee on Health Care.

He is expected to address, publicly for the first time, the fact that OHA wrongly paid out about \$74 million in federal Medicaid money.

The overpayments were first reported in The Oregonian a couple weeks ago and Republicans, including gubernatorial candidate Rep. Knute Buehler, have used the issue to criticize Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat. Brown has since directed Allen to seek repayment of the money.

The meeting begins at 8 a.m. in Hearing Room B.

## Oil train safety

Oregon has the weakest oil train regulation among West Coast states. Twice legislators have tried to remedy that and twice they've failed.

But a fiery derailment in Mosier, in the Columbia Gorge, a year and a half ago has provided urgency to the effort to tighten regulations.

"We're not safe in Oregon now when it comes to these spills," Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said in an interview. "We were really lucky out there that day."

On Tuesday, the House and Senate Interim Committees on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness will hold a joint meeting to learn more about Washington



Eugene residents Sophie and Jim Swirczynski cheer at a rally for a Healthy Climate and Clean Energy Jobs at the Capitol in 2016. Some lawmakers this session are pushing legislation to change forest management policies. MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

state's oil train safety planning, and how Oregon's regulations differ from Washington's.

"We're being told by the industry 'we can't do what you're proposing,'" Courtney said "We're trying to figure out why Washington has a very good approach to protecting the public, as well as first responders, but Oregon can't."

The meeting begins at 2 p.m. in Hearing Room F.

## Executive appointments

The Senate will vote midday Wednesday on Brown's appointments to a variety of state and regional organizations, pending consideration from the Senate Rules Committee on Monday.

Among the appointments are two of the most senior members of the state Senate: Sens. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, and Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day. Brown selected them for the Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Council, a multi-state group that develops regional energy strategies.

The expected departure of Devlin and Ferrioli from the Senate already has caused a chain reaction through state government. Politicians have expressed interest in both seats, appointments which are made by county commissioners in each district.

Meanwhile, Courtney will have to appoint a new co-chair for the budget-writing Joint Ways and Means Committee, replacing Devlin. And the Republican Cau-

cus will vote Wednesday on a new minority leader, filling Ferrioli's position.

## Fire season report

Wildfires raged across Oregon and the West this year. In Oregon, firefighting costs hit \$340 million by September.

Some lawmakers are pushing legislation to change forest management policies they say contribute to an increase in wildfires.

On Monday, the Senate Interim Environment and Natural Resources Committee will meet jointly with the House Interim Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees for an update on the fires from the Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service.

The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. in Hearing Room F. On Tuesday, the House Economic Development and Trade Committee will hear about the fire season's economic impact and recovery.

Among those invited to testify is Cynthia Rider, executive director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which was forced to cancel a number of outdoor performances due to heavy smoke.

The meeting begins at 8 a.m. in Hearing Room C. Contact the reporters: [tloew@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:tloew@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6779 or follow at [Twitter.com/TracyLoew](https://twitter.com/TracyLoew); [cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6864 or follow on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.

# Hundreds of students rally for DACA, Dream Act

LAUREN HERNANDEZ  
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL  
USA TODAY NETWORK

More than 300 Salem-Keizer students walked out of classes Thursday, marched to the Oregon State Capitol and demanded that legislators pass a Dream Act by the end of the year.

Students from North Salem, South Salem, McKay and McNary high schools, as well as Willamette University, filled the capitol steps and screamed, "say it loud, say it clear, immigrants are welcome here."

The rally was part of a nationwide effort organized by United We Dream, a national immigrant youth-led organization working to support undocumented immigrants.

The school walkout comes more than two months after President Donald Trump announced he would phase out former President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. The program allows roughly 11,280 Oregon recipients to live, study and work in the United States, or serve in the military, without fear of being deported.

"We're living in fear of being deported and in fear of not having opportunities here in the United States," said Temo Corrales, from Sinaloa, Mexico. "My future is uncertain."

Corrales moved to Oregon when he was a year old and is just months away from graduating from North Salem High School. He plans to attend Corban University to study worship arts or exercise science, but he said he's unsure if he'll be deported if protections are not extended to undocumented immigrants.

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# Rep. Blumenauer targets anti-marijuana lawmakers

JONATHAN BACH  
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon's leading marijuana advocate in Congress, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, has formed a political action committee aimed at unseating anti-marijuana lawmakers.

The Portland Democrat's Cannabis Fund is one in a growing suite of similar committees paying to promote weed-friendly candidates and policies. Pot committees raised at least \$177,840 in the 2015-16 election cycle, Federal Election Commission records show.

Some of the biggest names during the cycle included the National Cannabis Industry Association (\$104,066), the Marijuana Policy Project (\$47,140) and the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (\$26,634.11).

The new Cannabis Fund had a meager \$2,000 in contributions as of June — the last time it reported financial moves — but Blumenauer already has plans for where to direct the money.

At a Portland pot conference in October, Blumenauer said his "first target" is Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Texas.

Contention between the two lawmakers traces back to at least July, when Sessions helped block a vote on one of Blumenauer's amendments to ease restrictions for veterans trying to get ahold of medical marijuana through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Marijuana is still federally illegal.

In September, Sessions, who chairs the House Rules Committee, helped block the Rohrabacher-Blumenauer amendment, which would have stopped the Justice Department from using federal funds to prosecute medical marijuana users in states where the use is legal.

The Rohrabacher-Blumenauer amendment was also named for Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif. In February, the two congressmen, along with Reps. Jared Polis, D-Colo., and Don Young, R-Ala., started the first Congressional Cannabis Caucus, marking a new era for bipartisan marijuana support on Capitol Hill.

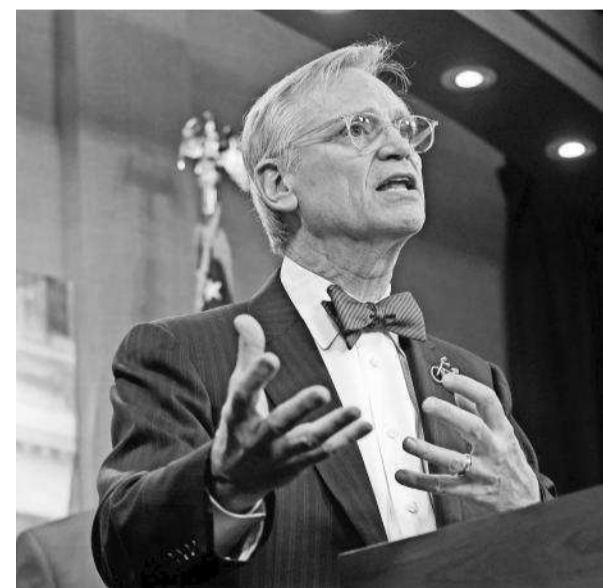
But they still faced resistance. Blumenauer said, "We're going to be putting up some billboards in Pete Sessions' district ... It's going to feature a veteran and ask the question why Pete Sessions doesn't want him to have access to his medicine."

"We're going to make the point that there are consequences," he said later. "This is not a free vote."

Russ Belville, who produces a marijuana podcast in Portland, first reported the speech in a video posted to social media.

Blumenauer said in a statement to the Statesman Journal: "The American people overwhelming support cannabis reform, and we have more support than ever in Congress. I launched the Cannabis Fund to keep up this momentum."

"I want to see even more pro-cannabis candidates elected to Congress and continue the wave of reforms happening at the state level. And we want to make clear that there are consequences for those elected officials opposing what a majority of the public sup-



"The American people overwhelming support cannabis reform," Rep. Earl Blumenauer said. ASSOCIATED PRESS

ports," he said.

Sessions told the Statesman Journal in a statement, "The merchants of addiction are attempting to influence our work and it's my hope that we will see this problem as a national crisis."

Sessions has long been anti-legalization and will do all he can to protect families from America's drug crisis, Caroline Boothe, a spokeswoman for Sessions, said in an email.

"While he is always open to listening about new developments, especially when it comes to helping our nation's veterans, he will not compromise the safety of our communities," Boothe said.

The billboard war is heating up in Texas as anti-pot group Smart Approaches to Marijuana Action launched its own digital board, along U.S. Route 75 close to Sessions' district office in Dallas, to support the congressman's stance.

The billboard shows Amanda, a Texas mother cradling a baby who says, "Thanks, Congressman Sessions for protecting my family against marijuana legalization."

Kevin Sabet, the group's president, said in a statement, "The marijuana industry, egged on by a politician from Portland, Oregon who is bankrolled by the pot lobby, has decided to target Congressman Sessions for championing his constituents health and safety."

"The pot lobby can't stand having someone standing up to their addiction-for-profit tactics," Sabet said. "But his constituents know better, and our billboard reflects their gratitude."

Reach reporter Jonathan Bach by email at [jbach@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:jbach@statesmanjournal.com) or by phone at 503-399-6714. Follow him on Twitter @JonathanMBach and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/jonathanbachjournalist](https://www.facebook.com/jonathanbachjournalist).

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