

# Brown's 2018 priorities include guns, opioids

**Connor Radnovich** Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gun violence, the opioid overdose epidemic, government waste, PERS and rural construction jobs are Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's five legislative priorities for the 2018 short legislative session beginning Feb. 5, she announced Jan. 10.

During the short session — which can last at most 35 days — lawmakers and legislative offices are limited to a fixed number of bills. Brown's bills will be released publicly next week.

## PERS unfunded liability

In line with Brown's position that the state cannot cut its way out from underneath the Public Employees Retirement System's unfunded liability, she is proposing another way to raise revenue.

That way is an employer incentive fund, where the state will use unexpected or one-time revenue to create "side accounts" and contribute 25 cents for every dollar employers put into the fund.

The governor's office described the proposal as another way to make side accounts more accessible as a way to pay down the unfunded liability.

The "unfunded liability" is the difference between what actuaries expect PERS to pay out to beneficiaries and what funds are available. It sits at around \$20 billion according to a report released in November.

## Gun violence

Brown is proposing an end to the so-called boyfriend loophole, which would prohibit individuals convicted of misdemeanor stalking or domestic violence from buying a gun.

The "boyfriend loophole" has received attention nationwide and is one of the policy targets for gun safety groups.

The loophole allows partners who aren't married or living with the person he or she abused to buy a gun.

As part of this legislation, authorities would be notified if prohibited individuals tried to buy a gun.

## Opioid overdoses

A multi-part attempt at addressing the ongoing opioid overdose epidemic in Oregon, Brown wants to take steps to require opioid prescribers to register for a state-wide monitoring program, create a peer mentor program and require an examination of ways to make addiction treatment more accessible.

Not all prescribers are registered with the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which the governor's office says limits the state's ability to identify illegal actions or negative health trends. The state's Opioid Task Force recommended making it a requirement was an important step.

The task force also recommended lowering barriers to accessing addiction treatment, so Brown's proposal would require a report looking at that possibility with the goal of legislation to come in 2019.

Another aspect of this proposal that could grow later on is an addiction mentorship program. Four counties would initiate a pilot program for peer mentors to help addicts down the road to recovery. Most of these peers would be addicts in recovery themselves.

## Rural construction

This bill would temporarily waive the fees and formal education requirements associated with obtaining supervisory licenses from the Construction Contractors Board, with the goal of getting more construction professionals working, particularly in rural areas.

Work experience would take the place of formal training.

The state would provide loans to incentivize the construction of affordable housing projects to subcontractors. Also, the bill would create grants to boost the training of local construction workers.

## Procurement

Addressing waste, Brown's final bill would attempt to lower procurement costs across the state's 85 executive agencies.

The ways the bill suggests doing so is through piloting a "reverse auction" seller bidding process, formalizing the "Oregon Buys" project (which tracks spending, among other things), and communicating to vendors that price

will be a more important aspect of approving contracts.

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