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Former Rep. Vic Gilliam of Silverton dies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Republican lawmaker who served for a decade in the Oregon Legislature before resigning in 2017 for health reasons has died, the GOP leadership said Thursday.

Victor "Vic" Gilliam, of Silverton, was 66 years old and had Lou Gehrig's disease. He had continued serving even when the disease slurred his speech and caused him to walk in the Oregon State Capitol with a cane.

"Never one to back down from a challenge, Vic had a heart for service and was dedicated to all Oregonians. His famous smile and good-nature earned him friends across the state," said Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod, of Stayton.

In November 2015, Gilliam announced that he received a preliminary diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS.

The year before, he had participated in the ice bucket challenge, aimed at raising donations to fund research into ALS, with his friend Rep. Brian Clem, a Democrat from Salem. A video shows the two on a bench on the Oregon State Capitol grounds getting buckets of ice and ice water poured over them as they pretended to hold a meeting.

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said Gilliam "was spectacular when he was giving a speech and could always make people laugh.

"He had a special sensitivity for the most valuable Oregonians, seniors and children," Courtney said. "You could tell that he took the legislative process seriously and felt it was a high honor to be a public servant."

Gilliam was appointed to the House in January 2007 and was elected five times before resigning in 2017.



Rep. Vic Gilliam laughs while speaking on the House floor of the Oregon State Capitol Monday July 8, 2013. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE



The Elsinore Theatre, seen here on Feb. 21, 2019, remains a historic landmark in downtown Salem.

MICHAELA ROMÁN / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Theaters hampered by lack of guidelines

Marion County moves into phase 2 of reopening

Bill Poehler

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Like many entertainment venues in Oregon, the Palace Theatre in Silverton closed days before Gov. Kate Brown's executive order in March.

Now that movie theaters and indoor entertainment venues can reopen as Marion County moves into phase 2 on Friday, Palace Theatre co-owner Stu Rasmussen isn't sure what to do.

The only movie venue in Silverton is tentatively scheduled to reopen July 15, but between the lack of new movies being released, the rise in COVID-19 infections in the county and the guidelines for reopening being unclear, Rasmussen isn't sure what to do and what will happen when it does.

"We face many more challenges being open than being closed," Rasmussen said.

Brown announced Wednesday that Marion and Polk counties would move to phase 2 beginning Fri-

day, citing a decrease in hospitalizations from COVID-19 in the counties.

With the move into the next phase, movie theaters like the Palace Theatre, Salem's Elsinore Theatre and Salem Cinema will be able to open for the first time in three months, as will swimming pools, bowling alleys and arcades, and restaurants and bars can stay open longer hours.

But with that reopening allowed, live entertainment venues are still concerned about how and when they should reopen.

The Elsinore Theatre has its first scheduled event since the shutdown for October, but the venue has been hesitant of when to schedule live events as questions linger about how they will be allowed to operate.

"To fire the machine up again and to get that going, it's a risk," Elsinore Theatre Executive Director Tom Fohn said. "What should we be risking it on? That's a question I get to answer. It's hard."

Marion and Polk counties entered the first phase of reopening May 22, which allowed restaurants to open for limited indoor seating and personal services like barbers.

On their entry into phase 2, however, people will be

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Oregon advocates celebrate victory after DACA decision

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Thursday that the Trump Administration acted illegally when it ended the Deferral Action Childhood Arrival program, known as DACA, advocates and educators in Oregon lauded the decision as a victory.

But they warned more action is needed to protect DACA recipients and those living undocumented in the United States.

The decision, which has been looming for months since it was argued before the Supreme Court in November, is expected to impact more than 700,000 recipients that currently benefit from DACA, including Oregon educators, students and their families.

About 11,000 people in Oregon are DACA recipients.

The decision made Thursday means DACA stands — for now.

Those immigrants are able to retain their protection from deportation and their authorization to work in the United States.

So-called "Dreamers" have been in limbo since President Donald Trump announced his intent to terminate the program in 2017.

Hundreds of thousands of people brought to the United States as children have used the program to have their deportations deferred and to work legally in the U.S. since former President Barack Obama created DACA through an executive order in 2012.

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70,000 self employed still haven't received benefits

Bill Poehler

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Three months after it was authorized under a federal relief package, unemployment benefits for about 70,000 self-employed people in Oregon remain unprocessed, Oregon Employment Department Acting Director David Gerstenfeld said Wednesday.

That's out of 97,000 people who have applied for those benefits.

"We know that these numbers are frustrating, discouraging and frightening," Gerstenfeld said.

He said the state has paid benefits to about 17,000 people in that category out of 24,000 who have had their claims addressed by the department.

Gerstenfeld said that those who qualify will eventually get the benefits they are due and encouraged them to continue applying.

"When we process them, they will be able to get retroactive benefits," he said. "It's easier on our end if they don't stop doing that each week."

Oregon has received 486,700 initial unemployment claims since March 15 and has paid out \$1.7 billion in benefits, according to data from the department, but about one-fifth of those were self-employed or gig workers who were never before eligible for benefits.

Under the CARES Act, which was signed into law in March, gig workers and the self-employed are eligible for the first time to receive unemployment at a \$600 per week rate as businesses were shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gerstenfeld said the department has been moving a number of its more experienced claims handlers from processing regular claims to the self-employed and gig worker category.

He said the Oregon National Guard has supplied about 15 people to handle claims, and it has focused them on calling people in those categories to work their way through claims.

"They have been focused on the ... program for reaching out to people who had submitted applications and some information was missing," he said.

Gerstenfeld said the department is adding 60 more people to handle those claims for self-employed and gig workers in the next week and continues to add more.

Those benefits are set to expire July 25.

"You would have thought that the federal government would have sunk some money into employment departments into getting temporary workers because they're not able to process claims," said Kevin Furey, a professor of economics at Chemeketa Community College.

Gerstenfeld said every time the department has come up with new ways for people to contact the department to process their claims — such as additional phone lines and email — it has been quickly overwhelmed.

He said since the department launched an initiative to process the backlog of regular claims, called Project Focus 100, two weeks ago, it has addressed 99% of those claims.

"We know that there are still some people waiting for regular unemployment benefits," Gerstenfeld said.

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