

Coalition calls for Rep. Nearman's expulsion

Group includes activists and community leaders

Connor Radnovich
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A coalition of local and business owners and organization directors are calling on the Oregon Legislature to expel Republican Rep. Mike Nearman for allowing violent demonstrators into the Capitol building in December. The group includes three Salem city councilors; the executive director of the Eugene/Springfield NAACP; the executive director of the Northwest Accountability Project; union leaders; and environmental activists.

"Since he has so far refused to resign, he needs to be removed," said Amy Herzfeld-Copple of the Western States Center. "This is the Legislature's right, it's their duty, and the evidence is clear that they can act now and don't need to wait to remove him from office."

The Oregon Constitution gives both legislative chambers the right to expel a member with a two-thirds vote. Expelling Nearman would require support from all 37 Democrats and at least 3 Republicans.

Legislative leadership has indicated they were

still examining how to approach internal consequences.

A criminal investigation by Oregon State Police is ongoing.

During a one-day special legislative session on Dec. 21, Nearman, who represents the Independence area, can be seen on surveillance footage exiting a side door of the Capitol while a protest against pandemic-related closures carried on outside.

People streamed into the building through that door, with at least 50 ultimately gaining access to a Capitol vestibule. They fought with police officers who were trying to remove them from the building; six Salem and Oregon State police officers were pepper-sprayed during the altercation.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, stripped Nearman of his committee assignments and also called on him to resign. Nearman has given up his 24/7 building badge access and must inform the Legislature whenever he intends to be in the Capitol.

Neither Nearman nor his legislative aide responded to requests for comment Monday. He was re-elected to repre-



Nearman

sent House District 23 in November.

Those who have signed onto the letter calling on Nearman to resign or be expelled:

- Eric K. Ward, Executive Director, Western States Center
- Peter Starzynski, Executive Director, Northwest Accountability Project
- Mary Chaffin, Act for Democracy, Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network
- Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
- Eric C. Richardson, Executive Director, Eugene/Springfield NAACP
- Christel Allen, Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon
- Susannah Morgan, CEO, Oregon Food Bank
- Judy Margles, Director, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education
- Samantha Gladu, Executive Director, Next Up & Next Up Action Fund
- Doug Moore, Execu-

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signed after public outcry was in 2018 when then-Sen. Jeff Kruse was accused of sexual harassment by multiple women, including fellow lawmakers.

Reporter Connor Radnovich covers the Oregon Legislature and state government. Contact him at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.

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Oregon's next vaccine phase includes 1.2M people

Tracy Loew
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USA TODAY NETWORK

About 1.2 million people will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccines in Oregon's next phase of administration, the state's Vaccine Advisory Committee decided.

This phase will come after adults age 65 and older, and the now-eligible categories that include healthcare workers, educators and residents living in long-term care facilities.

The newly announced phase includes:

- Adults age 16-64 with underlying health conditions. Those conditions were not specified. The committee estimates about 735,256 people will meet that criteria.
- Frontline workers who have been working throughout the pandemic and cannot work at home. Industries and occupations haven't yet been specified. That's an estimated 483,413 people.
- Adults and youth in custody. That's about 13,970 people.
- People living in low-income and congregate senior housing. That's an estimated 12,567 people.



The Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine is injected into the arm of a healthcare worker at a vaccination clinic at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem, Oregon, on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021. Salem Health and Marion County are partnering to offer public vaccination clinics for healthcare workers. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

It's a big group, especially as Oregon currently is receiving enough doses to vaccinate 50,000 people per week.

Committee members suggested local health authorities, such

as county health departments, could decide who within the group will go first in their local communities.

The 27-member committee had been tasked with sequencing five categories it had previously chosen to prioritize, but in the end decided to make only one wait: multi-generational households.

They'll come next, followed by the general public.

No priority for communities of color

The committee previously had identified Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) as another group to take priority for vaccinations. But an Oregon Health Authority review found that ran afoul of state law.

"We're not able to prioritize services or make decisions solely on somebody's race or ethnicity,"

Rachel Banks, state Public Health Division director, told committee members.

Instead, the group will include a statement with its recommendation noting that its priority decision was made in consideration of data about and in needs of people of color and vulnerable groups.

These groups have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, with higher infection and fatality rates.

Members also noted people of color are included in other priority groups, such as frontline workers and those with underlying health conditions.

A shortage of doses

Banks said the Oregon Health Authority may need to restrict eligibility within the large group if the number of doses Oregon receives does not increase.

"Ultimately we don't want to frustrate communities by having a lot of people that think, 'I'm eligible right now,' and know that there's not enough spots," Banks said.

"We'll have to think about how to do that in a way that wants to honor the breadth of this recommendation and also seeks to be working with communities so they're not further frustrated by how to get this in place," she said.

Who can get a shot now; who is next

In Oregon, vaccines currently are available to:

- Health care workers at hospitals, urgent care clinics, outpatient settings, public health and early learning settings.
- People who work in hospice programs, mobile crisis care and related services, secure transport and non-emergency

medical transport.

- Employees and residents of skilled nursing, long-term care and memory care facilities.
- Emergency medical services providers and other first responders.
- Tribal health programs.
- In-home care and day treatment services.
- People working in correctional settings.
- Death care workers.
- K-12 teachers and staff.
- Daycare staff.

On Feb. 8, the state will begin vaccinating residents age 80 and older, and will expand eligibility by age in five-year increments. The state hopes to expand to a new age group each week, but that will depend on the number of doses available.

Once everyone age 65 and older is vaccinated, the state will move on to the new, large group the Vaccine Advisory Committee recommended. That likely will happen sometime in March.

How to get a shot

Salem Health is coordinating several vaccine clinics in Marion and Polk counties. Days and hours depend upon vaccine availability.

Residents are asked to sign up for an appointment. There is no guarantee doses will be available for walk-ins.

For more information, go to <https://www.salemhealth.org/covid-19/covid-vaccine>.

The Oregon Health Authority recommends checking with county health departments for further information.

Tracy Loew is a reporter at the Statesman Journal. She can be reached at tloew@statesmanjournal.com, 503-399-6779 or on Twitter at @Tracy_Loew. Support local journalism by subscribing to the Statesman Journal.

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