

# Positive tax year for state, residents

## Boost to Oregon budget, near-historic personal kicker credit expected

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Driven by a historically bullish economic outlook, Oregon is expected to bring in an additional \$1.2 billion in tax revenue this biennium, with the next two biennia also looking far stronger than economists predicted at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Compared to the years-long impacts from other recent recessions to employment and personal incomes, “there is no long-run damage associated with the COVID pandemic and the recession,” state economist Josh Lehner told lawmakers on Wednesday.

Further demonstrating the state’s booming revenues, Oregonians are estimated to receive a \$1.4 billion personal “kicker” credit on their 2021 taxes.

The median Oregonian is projected to receive a kicker rebate of \$312 for 2021 taxes.

The bottom 20% income bracket would receive approximately \$25, while the top 1% would see nearly \$13,000.

Actual revenues are

expected to exceed start-of-biennium forecasts by nearly 10%; the kicker is triggered when the forecast is surpassed by 2%.

“We’re well above where we thought we would be, even pre-pandemic,” state economist Mark McMullen said.

Gov. Kate Brown said the expected revenues over the next three biennia present lawmakers with “a tremendous opportunity for transformational change.”

“And as we recover, we must work to create a more just and equitable Oregon, supporting the communities that have been disproportionately impacted,” Brown said in a statement. “By rooting our recovery efforts in racial equity, we can support economic growth for all of Oregon’s communities.”

Lawmakers expressed shock and delight at the revenue forecast.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, called the forecast “stunning.”

“Money is coming out of our ears,” said Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod, R-Stayton.

“In all my years at the Oregon Legislature, I have never seen a forecast like this,” said Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem. “If we join our hands and arms, we can really do something about the pain and suffering of Oregonians right now. If we don’t, we have no one to blame but ourselves.”

Lawmakers are also determining out how to spend \$2.6 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Much of the growth was attributed to federal pandemic relief dollars and fiscal policy.

However, economists warned growth could be slowed by labor shortages and the potential for spiraling inflation.

Oregon’s employment is expected to return to pre-recession levels midway through the next biennium, but pandemic fears, lack of in-person schooling and higher unemployment benefits have tightened the labor

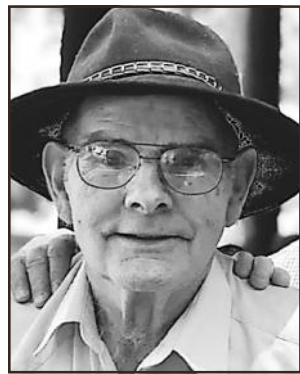


The Oregon Pioneer stands atop the Oregon State Capitol, in Salem, Ore. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL



State economist Mark McMullen. KOBBI R. BLAIR / STATESMAN JOURNAL



**Kenneth Lloyd Putnam**

SCOTTS MILLS - Kenneth Lloyd Putnam, 83, of Scotts Mills, OR, passed away on May 12, 2021 in his home. Lloyd, as he was known, was born to William Addison Putnam and Lucilli Alice Evarts on January 13, 1938 in Albany, OR. After serving in the U.S. Army, he married Lu Ann Taylor April 17, 1964. Aside from a short time in Idaho, Oregon was their home. He is survived by his children Steve (April), Jim (Heather), Aaron (Amie) and Laura (Rob) and his many grandchildren and great grandchildren. Memorial Service will be 6/19 at LDS Silverton Chapel at 11 AM.

market, economists said.

About 45,000 people are not looking for work due to the pandemic, according to the labor department.

“That’s a good year of job growth for Oregon,” McMullen said

As the revenue fore-

cast was being presented to lawmakers and the public, these legislative leaders were already proposing potential uses for the additional revenue.

Kotek said the Legislature should use the money to provide relief to Oregon families who are

struggling to pay rent, invest in recovering from the pandemic, “advance racial equity,” and address needs in housing and behavioral health.

“A year ago, the world was in a free fall. Oregon’s decisions and investments in the face of con-

verging crises have started an incredibly strong recovery,” Kotek said.

Republican leaders, meanwhile, said the state should direct money toward: pandemic relief, K-12 school budgets, career and technical education programs at community colleges, and communities impacted by last year’s wildfires.

They also pushed back against any plans to change the state’s kicker law or implement new taxes.

“Republicans will be pushing for these investments as we work to balance the budget with healthy reserves while limiting financial burdens caused by unnecessary new taxes or raiding the kicker,” said House Republican Leader Christine Drazen, R-Canby.

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## Countdown begins to discover where Columbus came from

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID – Was Christopher Columbus really from Genoa, in Italy? Or was he Spanish? Or, as some other theories have it, was he Portuguese or Croatian or even Polish?

A definitive answer to the question of where the famous explorer came from could be just five months away as international scientists on Wednesday launched an effort to read the DNA from his remains and identify his geographic origin.

Their findings are to be made public in October. Knowledge of the 15th-century navigator’s early life is scant.

A major breakthrough in establishing a fuller profile of the man who died 515 years ago came after DNA tests in 2003 established that bones in a tomb in the cathedral of Seville were those of Columbus.

But after that discovery, the research team from Spain’s University of Granada that is leading

the Columbus research decided to halt its investigation. The reason: DNA technology at the time was neither accurate nor reliable and required a significant amount of genetic material.

After leaps in the sophistication of DNA testing in recent years, gene geography may now ascertain the rough area of a European person’s ancestry.

José Antonio Lorente, a professor of forensic medicine at Granada University, said there had been a “radical” improvement in DNA analysis, which now permits tests on very small fragments.

He said researchers are working with four small bone fragments from Columbus, seven bone fragments and a tooth from his son Hernando, and a dozen bone fragments in poor condition from his brother Diego.

The fragments are being sent to genetic identification laboratories in Rome and Florence in Italy, Mexico and the United

States, Lorente told an online press conference.

Lorente said he believes the generally accepted theory that Columbus was from Genoa, but the project aims to resolve some “mysteries ... and contradictions” in the historical record and obtain “as much information as possible ... so that there is no argument.”

Granada University on Wednesday was hosting what it called the first world meeting of Columbus researchers, who are presenting evidence for their different theories about the explorer’s origins.

Columbus’s four transatlantic voyages on behalf of the Spanish monarchs between 1492 and 1504 opened a door to Europe’s colonization of the Americas, then known as the New World.

Columbus died on May 20, 1506, and was buried in the Spanish city of Valladolid, though he had asked to be buried in the Americas.



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