

Appeal Tribune

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2022 | SILVERTONAPPEAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregonians could get record tax kicker

But the threat of recession remains

Connor Radnovich
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon taxpayers are on track to receive a record \$3 billion personal tax kicker in 2024 powered by “unprecedented” income tax returns, state econ-

omists told lawmakers Wednesday during release of the state’s quarterly revenue forecast and economic outlook.

“This season, Oregon and all the other income tax states saw an unprecedented flood of revenues at the filing deadline,” state economist Mark McMullen said. “What that’s left us with is unprecedented balances for the current biennium.”

Since the last quarterly forecast was released in February, economists increased the state’s revenue forecast by

more than \$2.4 billion.

Oregon lawmakers touted the state’s economy while saying they needed to be responsible with how they disbursed the increased funds.

“Even with revenue growth, it is still important that we proceed with caution and plan for the future,” Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said. “Strong leadership in Oregon has led the state to a place where we have ample reserves to help us weather unprecedented times.”

However, McMullen noted that most

of this revenue spike will be offset by the time economists consider what the state will have to work with next biennium because Oregon’s unique kicker law will send most of the money back to voters.

The kicker is triggered when actual revenues exceed start-of-biennium projected revenues by at least 2%. So far actual revenues are 14% above predicted; kicker calculations are expected to

See TAX, Page 4A



Utah fire crews prepared to fight wildfires near Butte Falls in southern Oregon in September 2020. Firefighters trying to contain massive wildfires that month in Oregon, California and Washington state were constantly on the verge of exhaustion as they tried to save suburban houses, including some in their own neighborhoods.

MATTHEW MCFARLAND / ASSOCIATED PRESS

US struggling to hire firefighters

Labor shortage at heart of it despite record funding

Zach Urness

Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

The United States government has committed a record-setting amount of money to fighting wildfires this year during what promises to be a busy season, but it remains unclear whether the number of firefighters needed will be available amid a nationwide labor crunch.

With a busy start to the fire season in the Southwest and drought fueling high wildfire danger from the Great Plains to Northern California, federal officials are scrambling to hire roughly 16,900 fire personnel that include hotshots, smokejumpers and helitack crews.

A letter from 28 members of Congress sent Tuesday called on the two federal agencies that fight wildfires — the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior — to create a special pay rate for federal firefighters “to avert critical staffing

shortages in the wildland firefighting workforce.”

The lawmakers said staffing could be below 75% in some regions this season.

The two agencies have a combined budget of \$4.7 billion. They have 1,549 fire engines and more than 310 helicopters, air tankers and airplanes that can drop water or watch the forest for smoke.

However, without adequate staffing, many of those fire engines could sit idle, stated the letter, which noted that “last year, fire officials were unable to fill an unprecedented 1,800 requests for wildland firefighting crews and more than 1,900 requests for fire engines.”

In one state, the Forest Service had 60 engines idle because of low staffing in the midst of the largest fire in state history, the letter stated.

Overall, the number of firefighters and resources should be slightly up from last year, with funding for

See SHORTAGE, Page 4A

Salem students win first place in national science competition

Capi Lynn

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A team of third and fourth graders at Queen of Peace Catholic School have come up with an idea to reduce microplastic pollution, using technology that hasn’t been invented yet.

Their Fungi Plastivore Purifier, an environmentally friendly hover machine that locates and dissolves plastic particles in contaminated soil, won first place in their age category in the Toshiba/National Science Teachers Association ExploraVision competition.

Jonathan Barra, Esau Segura, Claire Stout and Audrey Wiegall will each receive a \$10,000 U.S. Series EE Savings Bond and an expense-paid trip June 1-4 to Washington, D.C., for the awards ceremony, where they’ll get to present their winning idea to Bill Nye the Science Guy.

But first, they took an opportunity Tuesday to run their presentation by Salem Mayor Chuck Bennett and a Statesman Journal reporter.

They explained how microcapsules manufactured using a 3D printer with hemp filament can be released to an area where plastic is detected, expand with heat and moisture, and grow a web of threads called mycelium that breaks down the particles and turns them into organic matter.

Plastic, even tiny particles, can contaminate the soil where crops are grown and enter the food supply, they explained.

“This just sounds like an absolute stroke of genius,” Bennett said, with the presentation barely underway.

They used words like *Pestalotiopsis microspore*, as hard to pronounce as they are to spell, sounding more like a group of scientists than third and fourth graders.

They showed off their prototype and explained how it would operate using tilt sensors and electrical lift charges. They shared pages and pages of research outlining present and future technology, design process and consequences. They demonstrated their Website and played a two-minute video they had to produce.

Submitting an ExploraVision project takes a serious commitment. These students have been working on the project since September, with instruction and guidance at school from mentor Maureen Foelkl and support at home from their parents.

ExploraVision doesn’t frown on parent support. It’s encouraged.

Mike Barra, Jonathan’s dad, did much of the filming for the video. Heidi Wiegall, Audrey’s mom, helped with the animation for the Website.

“You can’t do it without parent help,” Foelkl said.

Foelkl, a retired Salem-Keizer Public Schools elementary teacher and 2018 inductee to the National Teachers Hall of Fame, has been using science to challenge the minds of countless Salem area stu-

See STUDENTS, Page 4A

Oregon’s official state poet returns

Steven Tonthat

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon governor Kate Brown reappointed Anis Mojgani as Oregon’s Poet Laureate for a second term. Mojgani, who originally started serving in the coveted position in May 2020, will now continue through 2024.

“I applaud Anis for his creative efforts to connect with Oregonians during the pandemic,” says Governor Brown. “He now has the opportunity to travel and make the personal connections that can be so powerful. Extending his term allows him to fulfill his vision as Poet Laureate.”

When Mojgani took over two years ago, he had to navigate how to perform poetry while keeping audience members safe and socially distant.

“Some ideas were ones that couldn’t happen within

a pandemic and other ones were ideas that were birthed because of being in a pandemic, but still weren’t able to come to fruition,” he says.

Known primarily as a spoken-word poet, Mojgani began reciting poems from the window of his art studio in Portland. Eventually, he started to attract fairly large audiences.

“It’s been a really wonderful experience for me. And it has seemed to have been a pretty wonderful experience for the people who’ve gathered to watch.”

As his tenure continued and the state’s restrictions on in-person events slowly eased, Mojgani reached out to communities beyond Portland.

“I was able to make my way to Lincoln City for one of my only in-person visits, working with some of the folks there to foster and imagine what ways poetry

See POET, Page 3A

Online at SilvertonAppeal.com

News updates: ● Breaking news ● Get updates from the Silverton area

Photos: ● Photo galleries

Vol. 141, No. 23

Serving the Silverton Area Since 1880
A Unique Edition of the Statesman Journal

©2022 50 cents
Printed on recycled paper



A team of four students from Queen of Peace Catholic School won first place in their age division of the 2022 Toshiba/National Science Teachers Association ExploraVision competition. From left: Esau Segura, Audrey Wiegall, Jonathan Barra and Claire Stout. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL