

# Lawmakers set aside \$20 million for schools affected by wildfires

By Peter Wong  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers have set aside \$20 million to help schools damaged in the Labor Day wildfires.

The action Monday, Oct. 12, by the legislative Emergency Board will enable the Department of Education to aid up to 33 school districts, three education service districts and a public charter school. The districts will have to furnish estimates to the agency, which then will report back to lawmakers about how much needs to be drawn from the state emergency fund.

The districts likely to be hardest hit are Santiam Canyon, McKenzie and Phoenix-Talent. All of them have set up relief funds to help families affected by the Beachie Creek, Holiday Farm and Alameda wildfires.

Todd Miller, the Santiam Canyon superintendent, said the wildfires resulted in

smoke damage he estimates at \$2.5 million.

“I have teams ready to start cleaning,” Miller told U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley on their Sept. 26 visit to Gates and Mill City. “I do not have an answer to who pays for it.” Most of the buildings

Emergency Management Agency. But reimbursement could take months, even years, and FEMA requires a 25% local match.

State money also could be spent on reopening schools that have been closed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Schools

“When these schools are cleaned of smoke and safety hazards, the schools and their educators provide more than education; they are safe spaces for students who experienced trauma during the fires,” Girod said in a statement after the vote. “These school dis-

wildfire damages before the board approves the \$20 million outright. Its report concludes:

“This sends the message to districts that the Legislature, through the Emergency Board, supports and anticipates addressing the issue, but will wait a short period until sufficient information still outstanding is collected and assessed to determine the proper mix of finance alternatives.”

In a separate action, lawmakers heard a report on how \$1.6 million in federal funds were spent on extra pandemic-related expenses of county elections officials. Twenty-eight of Oregon’s 36 counties, including the three Portland area counties, received money for expenses related to the May 19 primary and Nov. 3 general election.

All but \$100,000 of the money came from the counties’ share of \$1.4 billion Oregon received in state aid

from the federal CARES Act. The other \$100,000 went to the state Elections Division, and that amount was not charged to the counties.

Multnomah County got a total of \$524,979 for a new extraction desk that automatically opens the ballot envelopes returned by voters, an image scanner, changes in election facilities and voter education.

Clackamas County got \$124,082 for personal protective equipment and upgraded hardware and Washington County got \$19,324 for personal protective equipment and laptop computers.

The Emergency Board plans to hear a report, possibly on Oct. 19, on how Oregon has spent the \$1.4 billion in federal aid from the CARES Act that was signed by President Donald Trump on March 27. The state must spend the money by Dec. 31.

*“When these schools are cleaned of smoke and safety hazards, the schools and their educators provide more than education; they are safe spaces for students who experienced trauma during the fires.”*

— Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod, who lost his home in Lyons to the fires

at the former Gates Elementary School, which the district sold in 2014 after moving the school to Mill City, were destroyed in the fire. But the historic 1927 building survived.

State money could be loaned to districts for cleanup costs until they get reimbursed by the Federal

can serve as a gathering place for students without homes or without the broadband communications they need for distance learning.

Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod, whose house in Lyons was destroyed in the fires, was among the lawmakers who voted for the set-aside.

districts lacked insurance coverage to tackle wildfire and smoke damage, and the \$20 million available for financial assistance will help reopen their doors.”

The Legislative Fiscal Office, which does budget analyses for lawmakers, recommended that the agency assess the cost of

## Oregonians to receive \$5M from unclaimed property program

By Phil Hawkins  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — If you receive a letter in October stating you will receive a check from the state of Oregon in November, don’t throw it out — it’s not a scam.

Beginning this week, qualifying current and former Oregonians will begin receiving notifications from the state that they will be mailed checks in November ranging from between \$50 and \$2,500.

The funds are part of a historic distribution of unclaimed funds through the unclaimed property program, which is disbursing approximately \$5 million this fall.

The checks are funds — referred to as unclaimed property — that have been

reported to the state by companies and organizations that do business with Oregonians and have been unable to return the money to the correct owner.

Common examples of unclaimed property include uncashed checks, forgotten bank accounts, security deposits, tax refunds, credit balances, investment accounts, payroll checks, refunds and more.

Typically, people need to file a claim with the unclaimed property program to receive the funds they are owed.

However, given the unprecedented financial uncertainties and difficulties many are facing, the state has determined, for the first time ever, the funds will be directly

mailed to the correct owner.

The unclaimed property program holds more than \$700 million in unclaimed funds for 3 million owners.

To recover funds not distributed this fall, property owners can file a claim at unclaimed.oregon.gov.

The unclaimed property program advises people who receive letters about the forthcoming checks to wait for the checks to arrive, as filing a claim may delay processing by 6 to 7 months.

Questions about unclaimed funds can be directed to the Oregon Unclaimed Property Program by email (claims@dsl.state.or.us) or phone at 503-986-5251 or 503-986-5200.

## Court rules press, others still exempt from dispersal orders

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Journalists and legal observers will be exempt from federal officers’ orders to disperse during Portland protests as federal agencies appeal a lower court’s preliminary injunction, a federal appeals court panel ruled Friday, Oct. 9.

The panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a split 2 to 1 ruling, declined the emergency motion by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Marshals Service, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. The motion sought to put on hold the injunction

that U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon granted on Aug. 20.

“Having considered the parties’ complete briefing, and after hearing oral argument, we conclude that the Federal Defendants have not shown a strong likelihood of success on the merits,” the ruling said. “The Federal Defendants also failed to demonstrate they are likely to suffer irreparable injury if the preliminary injunction is not stayed pending appeal.”

The ruling comes as the city marks over four months of protests against police violence and sys-

temic racism that have drawn people to Portland, often ending with confrontations between police and some protesters who have set fires, thrown fireworks and other objects at officers and vandalized government buildings.

Simon granted the injunction after the ACLU submitted 34 separate statements from journalists, photojournalists and legal observers who said they suffered shots to the back, neck and legs from impact munitions fired by federal officers outside the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse in downtown since early July.

**Tires LES SCHWAB**  
DOING THE RIGHT THING SINCE 1952™

Changing seasons mean  
*It's Tire Changing Season*

ARE YOU READY FOR WINTER DRIVING?  
Make an online appointment and avoid the wait in the store

Hours  
Mon-Fri: 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM  
Sat: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

**2306 Adams Ave**  
**La Grande, OR 97850**  
**(541) 963-8411**

We're just west of I-84 (exit 261)  
on Adams Ave at 20th St.

**lesschwab.com**

# Get Screened.

Early detection is the best defense against breast cancer, dramatically improving treatment success and survival rates. If breast cancer is found early, the five-year survival rate is almost 100 percent.

The 3D technology used at Grande Ronde Hospital detects 41% more of invasive cancers, while also reducing false positive results by up to 40%.

Bottom line? We provide a more accurate mammogram, for earlier detection and better survival rates — for YOU.

Health care is our Mission. Patients are our Passion.

[grh.org/BreastCancer](http://grh.org/BreastCancer)