

## TAXES

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additional \$103 million this year, and \$9 million next year, from taxes generated by that stimulus money. That's 3.6% of the \$3.1 billion in stimulus money that Oregonians received.

That tax hike won't hit everyone, though. Low-income Oregonians with no federal tax liability won't pay more in state taxes, and some high-income residents with large federal tax bills won't pay, either.

The more people earn, generally speaking, the more they will owe — but even some Oregonians earning under \$50,000 a year will owe \$100 in additional taxes. That's a hefty chunk of their stimulus payments.

While stimulus payments from 2008 had a similar effect on Oregonians' taxes, few people anticipated the pandemic relief payments would generate additional costs. And few people appear to have set aside money to cover the costs.

Congress intended the stimulus payments to be tax free, according to U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield.

"It is unconscionable to ask those working families who have struggled the most during this crisis to bear the weight of the state's budget shortfall," DeFazio wrote in a letter to Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders last week. He asked them to relieve Oregonians of those higher taxes.

Oregon State Sen. Dick Anderson, R-Lincoln City, plans to introduce a bill to protect Oregonians' stimulus checks from state tax implications.

"The sole purpose of federal stimulus checks was to give people help when they needed it the most," Anderson said in a statement last week. "There is no justification for the state to be taking some off the top. Helping people get back on their feet means helping them keep more money in their pockets."

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said he does not think it's right for the state to tax the stimulus payments, and there seems to be support on both sides of the political aisle to tackle the matter. He said Anderson's bill is under review and likely to drop no later than early next week. The thrust of the proposal, he said, would give refunds on next year's taxes.

Gov. Kate Brown's office said she is interested in an "overall conversation" about the effects of stimulus programs on Oregon taxes. Spokeswoman Liz Merah said the governor wants to consider the question of stimulus taxes in the broader context of how federal relief programs have impacted Oregon's budget.

Other elements of the programs, she said, have reduced Oregon's tax revenues and more changes could be coming with a new relief bill now before Congress.

## MOLLY

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Jensen booked a flight to California with McGlothin to Jurupa Valley, home to dog training school Adlerhorst International. Several other law enforcement agencies were there, each wanting to select a dog for their unit. Among the 70 dogs available, many departments wanted Molly, the only Dutch shepherd, and the smallest dog at the kennel.

"They're rare," Jensen said of the breed.

When they announced Molly was headed for La Grande, Jensen was ecstatic — and nervous. Molly now was his companion for life.

### First days

Though small, Molly is not to be trifled with. For the fledgling handler, it was time to learn the ropes and take the leash. While Jensen said he had an idea what he was getting into, he didn't know what to expect.

"She wanted to play — I know now she wanted to play — but she scared me," he said about his first days back at home with Molly. "She had me backed in the corner, jumping up, barking at me. I was like, 'I don't know what to do! I'm stuck in the corner!' So I got her calmed down and in the kennel and I called Erik."

It would take time to build a bond between the two. The first time Molly needed a bath, Jensen was hesitant.

"I got her in the bathtub and she gave me this look that said, 'No, I don't think we'll do that,'" he said. "So I ended up paying \$50 to have her bathed."

While he spoke about their early days together, Molly rested her head on the laptop in the police vehicle as he scratched her head.

"It's a bond that most won't understand and only few will know, and that's the bond between a handler and their K-9," Jensen said. "We protect each other."

While Molly is capable of being an attack dog, that's a big misconception about K-9s, according to her handler.

"She's not an attack dog, she's not a bite dog," he said. "Sure, she does bite, but really she's a patrol dog. Maybe the misconception is part of the culture that people grew up with."

### Part of the pack

K-9s such as Molly aren't just working dogs. For their handlers, they're part of the family.

Jensen, who has another dog at home, said as soon as he dons his uniform, Molly won't leave his side.

"You're with the dog 24/7. You form this really special bond," he said.



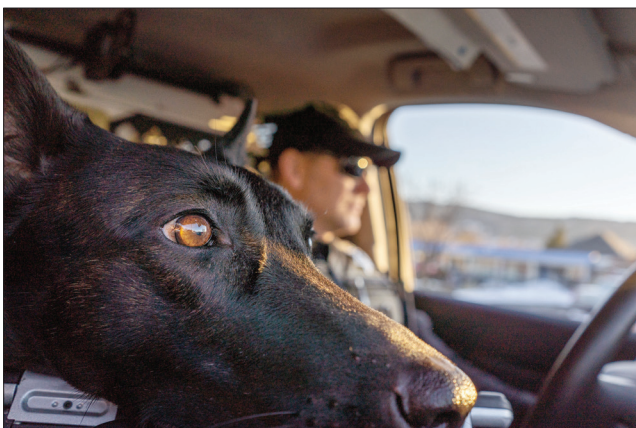
Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County sheriff's deputy Dane Jensen reaches for a roll of carpet he uses for training K-9 unit Molly on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021. While the toy helps with training, Jensen says the main reward for Molly is the attention and affection she receives for following orders.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Union County sheriff's deputy Dane Jensen and K-9 unit Molly walk through an abandoned building in La Grande during training on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

K-9 unit Molly rests on a laptop Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021, inside Union County sheriff's deputy Jensen's vehicle as the sun sets along Highway 203 near La Grande.

"We went on vacation for 10 days. That was the longest I've been away from her. The guy who was taking care of her said, 'She looks for you every day.'"

The bond goes both ways, and Jensen's commitment to the dog is evident. He sells challenge coins and stuffed "Molly" dolls and the proceeds go entirely back into funding training and equipment for Molly, from ballistic

vests to dog earmuffs for live-fire training. The community also has welcomed Molly as a member of its larger family. Jensen said the com-

munity support for Molly has been tremendous. Employees at Walmart pitched in \$900 to the program as a Christmas gift. Jensen was lost for words because of the generosity, and he was able to buy the special earmuffs for her.

Locals aren't the only ones keeping up on Molly. Her Instagram page, which Jensen runs, boasts nearly 2,000 followers, some as far-flung as Germany, Australia and Portugal. He mostly post snippets of the K-9's daily life — one video shows Molly barking to the chorus of Hanson's "MMMBop."

Molly also has had a positive effect on Jensen, who said becoming her

handler changed his life. "When I got Molly, it was like a recharge," Jensen said. "I love coming to work. I love it when my phone rings and it's dispatch. Whether it's 1 or 3 in the morning, it doesn't matter, I'm like, 'This is go time.'"

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