

House extends foreclosure moratorium in Oregon

By **PETER WONG**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A moratorium on residential foreclosures would continue through June 30, and possibly to the end of this year, under a bill that is halfway through the Oregon Legislature.

Two Republicans joined 36 Democrats in the House to pass House Bill 2009, which narrows the scope of the moratorium that had been in effect until the end of last year. The 38-21 vote on Tuesday, April 6, sent the bill to the Senate.

The state extension coincides with a longer moratorium announced Feb. 25 by the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which regulates the federally backed mortgages that account for about 70% of the total. Congress does not need to approve federal extensions.

But the Legislature must approve a state extension, which now would apply only to a total of five residential properties per owner — each property can contain no more than four units — and no commercial property.

The new bill empowers Gov. Kate Brown to extend the state moratorium by executive order to cover the final two quarters of this year. But she must give notice by June 14. The moratorium has been in effect since the start of the coronavirus pandemic a year ago.

The Legislature wrote Brown's executive order into law on June 26, but that law ended on Dec. 31.

Rep. Paul Holvey, a Democrat from Eugene and the bill's floor manager, said federal aid is on the way. Congress approved mortgage assistance in December that will result in an estimated \$40 million for Oregon, and its approval of President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan last month will make available up to \$100 million more for Oregon.

"We need time to make sure that assistance from the federal government will enable homeowners to have deficiencies in their payments and their mortgages to be cured," Holvey said, "without impacting their future their ability to have credit and return to our normal way of life."

"It is imperative that we as a legislature do everything we can to keep people safe during this pandemic, to keep them from becoming homeless, to keep them from losing the major asset of their lives because of their inability to make payments through no fault of their own."

According to a Household Pulse survey conducted in January by the U.S. Census Bureau, Holvey said, 7.2% of Oregon homeowners

(133,355) reported they were not caught up on their mortgage payments and 7.5% (140,319) said they had little or no confidence in paying the next month's mortgage.

Republicans Cedric Hayden of Lowell and Ron Noble of McMinnville joined 36 Democrats to vote for the bill.

All the votes against the main bill were cast by Republicans, who sided with arguments by banks and credit unions during a March 3 hearing that the bill was unnecessary. A Republican substitute, which was rejected on a party-line vote, would have limited the moratorium extension to the 30% of mortgages not backed by federal agencies — but also would not have limited what lenders could do.

"Banks and credit unions are continuing to work individually with their borrowers to continue to ensure they can avoid foreclosure," Rep. Daniel Bonham, a Republican from The Dalles, said in promoting the substitute. "The share of mortgage loans that are delinquent or in forbearance continues to decline as the economy improves."

According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, he said, Oregon's foreclosure rate was 4.96%, putting it 48th among the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Senate expands list of who should report child abuse, human trafficking

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Senate on Monday, April 5, expanded the list of those who should report possible child abuse to include hoteliers, and those who should report suspected human trafficking to include employees of restaurants and bars.

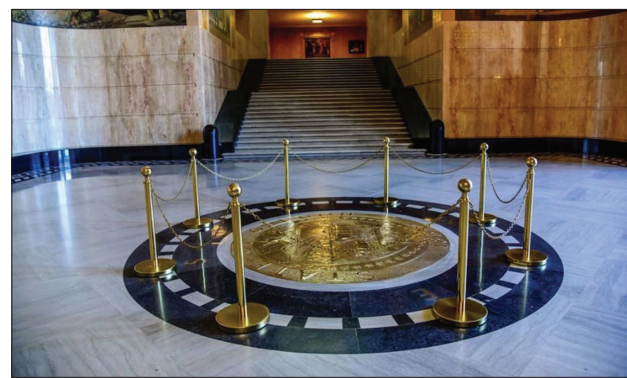


Findley said "Sexual exploitation crimes often go unreported and victims don't have the resources they need to find help," said Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale. "The more reporting the community does, the better."

Both bills on the matter were introduced by members of the Republican Senate caucus and passed with bipartisan support. They now go to the House for consideration.

Senate Bill 515 requires employees of bars and restaurants to report reasonable belief of suspected human trafficking or unlawful employment of minors.

The bill passed 27-1, with all Democrats supporting the legislation and Rep. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, voting no.



EO Media Group, File
The Oregon Senate on Monday, April 5, 2021, expanded the list of those who should report possible child abuse to include hoteliers, and those who should report suspected human trafficking to include employees of restaurants and bars.

"By all of us taking a little responsibility for the most vulnerable in our communities, we can make a difference," said Senate Minority Leader Fred Girod, R-Stayton.

Senate Bill 535 makes hotelkeepers and innkeepers mandatory reporters of child abuse. It also requires computer technicians and processors to immediately report suspected child pornography found on devices or systems they work on.

"Trafficking and sex crimes are happening in our own backyard, and we need more tools to fight them," said Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend. "These employees can

play an important role in reporting."

The bill passed 26-2, with all Democrats voting yes, while Heard and Sen. Brian Boquist, a long-time GOP lawmaker from Dallas who has declared himself an independent, both voted no.

During the initial call of the vote, Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, asked Senate President Peter Courtney for a "Call of the Senate." This impels senators to come to the floor to vote.

In the initial roll call, neither Heard or Boquist responded to the roll call. In the last roll call, they both voted no.

STATE NEWS BRIEFS

Oregon Tech faculty union votes to authorize strike

KLAMATH FALLS — The Oregon Institute of Technology's faculty union voted this week to authorize a strike.

The vote last week comes more than 500 days after negotiations began between the union and school administration, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. Oregon Tech's chapter of the American Association of University Professors is seeking salary increases and more clearly defined workload limits, among other requests.

The union said as of Friday, April 2, 96% of faculty had cast their votes, and 92% of those votes were in favor of authorizing a strike.

It is not guaranteed that the faculty will strike, but union leadership can now call for one if an agreement isn't reached.

If a strike happens, it would be the first-ever faculty strike at an Oregon public university. Portland State's faculty union voted to authorize a strike in 2014, but then reached a deal. Eastern Oregon's faculty union similarly came close to striking in 2006.

University officials said both parties last met on Thursday and are scheduled to meet again Monday. The faculty union also said negotiations would continue.

Photographer: Mayor should denounce police protest actions

PORTLAND — An independent photographer who said she was assaulted by Portland police during protests received a \$50,000 settlement, which her law-

yers say is the biggest following the city's racial justice protests.

Teri Jacobs is now calling on Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler to denounce the police force and their actions toward press and protesters, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Jacobs, who won the settlement in February, released an open letter to Wheeler this week, calling for him to condemn the officers who have been violent to protesters.

A spokesperson for Wheeler's office said they had not previously been aware of the letter.

"Police are consistently assaulting and hurting humans, and that doesn't seem to bother the mayor," Jacobs told the newspaper. "It seems like property is the only thing he's concerned about."

The Oregon Justice Resource Center, which represented Jacobs, said she was photographing an Aug. 18, 2020, protest with a visible press pass when police ordered people to disperse.

The Oregon Justice Resource Center said Jacobs was trying to leave when a police officer ran after Jacobs, hit her on the back of her head, neck and back with a stick, then knocked her down and hit her in the face.

Jacobs' lawyers said the incident was caught on camera and when the officer saw he was being filmed, he stopped hitting Jacobs and moved away.

Oregon lawmakers look at improving long-term care facilities

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers have been considering a bill to establish staffing ratios in long-term care facilities based on

patient needs.

Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, who is the cosponsor of Senate Bill 714, said there's not a one-size fits all approach, KLCC reported.

"Ultimately, this is about the residents that live in these facilities and their right to have dignified lives, to be safe, to be comfortable," Gelser said. "For them to do that, they need to be supported by staff and staff are exhausted."

Gelser said with the pandemic limiting family members' access to care homes, staffing issues have become more apparent as often family would normally help out with care. She added staff need more training, support and pay.

Many of the staff who tried to unionize at the Rawlin Memory Care facility in Springfield have resigned, KLCC reported. Some are working to help make changes at the state level.

Summer Trosko was a med tech for 14 years, most recently at The Rawlin. She's working with the Service Employees International Union to lobby for Senate Bills 714 and 703. SB 703, which Gelser also cosponsored, would require the Department of Human Services and the Oregon Health Authority to adopt quality metrics for caregiver registries, home health agencies, in-home care agencies and certain residential care facilities.

"They would change everything if we could get these passed," Trosko said. "They'll use an acuity based staffing tool where they'll go by the acuity of the residents and decide how much staff we need based on their needs."

— Associated Press

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Union County will begin their roadside spraying program to control vegetation and noxious weeds that are encroaching on county road shoulders and right-of-ways. In most locations, spraying will extend four to eight feet from pavement edges. Property owners who do not want herbicides applied near their property must sign an "Owner Will Maintain" agreement with the county which must be updated annually. The county will provide signs for the owners participating. Property owners wishing to participate can sign up for the "Owner Will Maintain" program at the Union County Public Works Department located at 10513 N. McAlister Road in Island City. Any questions, please call Brian Clapp 541-805-5399 or email bclapp@union-county.org.

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