

Oregon's state song awaits an official makeover

By **PETER WONG**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's official state song, nearly a century old, is about to get a makeover to remove words that advocates of change say reflect a racist past.

The Oregon House has adopted and sent to the Senate a resolution that changes some of the words to "Oregon, My Oregon," which the Legislature approved as the state song in 1927.

House Concurrent Resolution 11, which passed 47-6 on Friday, April 16, replaces the first verse by J.A. Buchanan: "Land of the Empire Builders, Land of the Golden West/Conquered and held by free men, Fairest and the Best."

It substitutes these words by Amy Shapiro: "Land of Majestic Mountains, Land of the Great Northwest/Forests and rolling rivers, Grandest and the best."

In the second stanza, the phrase "Blest by the blood of martyrs" is replaced by "Blessed by the love of freedom."

Shapiro is a constituent of Rep. Sheri Schouten, D-Beaverton, and the revised lyrics were sung in the House chamber on Feb. 14, 2020, Oregon's 161st anniversary of statehood.

"I was too young to realize that every time we sang those words ... we were celebrating the darkest aspects of our state's racist history, and reinforcing it in



Oregon Secretary of State/Contributed Graphic

"Oregon, My Oregon" has been the official state song of Oregon since 1927. The Legislature is moving to change some of the song's lyrics, including the line that states, "Land of the Empire Builders, Land of the Golden West/Conquered and held by free men, Fairest and the Best." The new lyrics would be "Land of Majestic Mountains, Land of the Great Northwest/Forests and rolling rivers, Grandest and the best."

the present," Schouten said.

"The good news is that we have evolved somewhat and school kids no longer sing those disturbing lyrics ... All Oregonians of all ethnic and racial backgrounds deserve a state song they can sing with pride and affection."

Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer,

was one of six who voted against it. Post recalled that in 2017, Buchanan's granddaughter sought his help in raising money for a tombstone for Buchanan at his grave in Warrenton. (Buchanan was in the Oregon House two terms

from Southern Oregon, but lived in Astoria in 1920, when he wrote the original lyrics for a competition sponsored by the Society of Oregon Composers.)

Post said he asked her then how she would feel if the lyrics were changed.

"She told me if we did so, it would be like rewriting T.S. Eliot or Shakespeare. The song as is, she said, reflects the period of time and the writer's intention," he said. "I would find it hard to change the words of a song that schoolchildren have sung for nearly a century."

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, traces his family roots to the white pioneers who came in the mid-1800s. Ann Elizabeth Bills, his great-great-grandmother, is credited with sewing the first U.S. flag ever flown in Oregon. He said when he hears the state song, she and people like her come to mind.

"It is special," he said. "And not all of us hear it in a manner that comes across as offensive or racist. So I apologize to those of us who do — but I don't."

Rep. Cedric Hayden, R-Lowell, said he also traces his Oregon roots to the mid-1800s and is a sixth-generation Oregonian. His father, also named Cedric, was in the House 14 years.

"I am concerned with erasing our history because we learn from the mistakes we have made," he said.

Who is the 'fairest'?

Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, said he also traces his family heritage to an ancestor who arrived in Oregon in the mid-1800s. He is married to Carol Suzuki, a staffer in the Senate Majority Office, whose father was interned during World War II.

Clem said what struck him was the song's line about the "fairest and the best," when his daughter, then age 8, asked him a question.

"It hit home for me when my own daughter said three years ago — that's not ancient history — 'Do I look white enough to avoid being deported?'" he said.

"That line should not evoke in her the question of whether she is fair enough to avoid what happened to her grandfather, and not get locked up because she looks more like her dad than her mom, and avoid being sent to concentration camps in the desert by the government."

Rep. Andrea Valderrama, D-Portland, said the current lyrics demean Blacks and indigenous tribes. Although Oregon was admitted to the Union in 1859 as an anti-slavery state, its 1857 Constitution also specified that Black people were unwelcome. (Voters repealed that section in 1926 and removed all racial references in 2002.)

"Written in the 1920s, the song's racist and violent lyrics wrongly and disturbingly celebrate the geno-

cide of the Oregon tribes," Valderrama, the newest member and one of a record nine members of color in the House, said. "This is dehumanizing, insulting and traumatizing. It has no place in our state song. So I ask: Whose Oregon is this song talking about? Because this is not my Oregon."

Rep. Dacia Grayber, D-Portland, said: "What is not sung in this song is the history of our First Nations, people who were brought to this country against their will in the shackles of slavery, and those who have immigrated to make this nation and this state richer and better. It is time for us to sing the history that is reflective of all of Oregon."

Rep. Mark Meek, D-Oregon City, drew notice April 8 when he sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often known as the Black national anthem, during a debate on a resolution to designate June 19 as a state holiday. Juneteenth, as it is known, observes the day that slavery was proclaimed at an end in the United States.

Unlike that song, or "America the Beautiful," Meek — who is Hispanic — said he feels differently about "Oregon, My Oregon."

"Here's the shame of this: This is our state song, and I don't know how to sing it," he said. "Songs are meant to be sung, and they should be fun songs, songs that you love. I don't know this song, because it does not relate to me."

CDC investigating woman's death after J&J vaccine

By **GILLIAN FLACCUS**
and **SARA CLINE**
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Oregon health officials said Thursday, April 22, that federal officials are investigating the death of a woman in her 50s who developed a rare blood clot and low platelets within two weeks of receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine against COVID-19.

The Oregon Health Authority learned of the probe on Tuesday, two days after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began the investigation, the agency said. The woman, whose name was not released, received the dose before the CDC ordered a pause on the vaccine amid concerns it could cause dangerous clots.

The woman developed a "rare but serious blood clot in combination with very low platelets," OHA said in a statement.

Dr. Shimi Sharief, senior health advisor for the state's health authority, said the woman's symptoms were consistent with other cases — severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath.

Health officials declined to release any further details, including the date



David Zalubowski/Associated Press, File

This Saturday, March 6, 2021, photo, shows vials of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital pharmacy. Oregon health officials said Thursday, April 22, 2021, that federal officials are investigating the death of a woman in her 50s who developed a rare blood clot and low platelets within two weeks of receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

the woman got the vaccine or where in Oregon she lived, citing patient privacy. The woman was hospitalized before her death and got the vaccine in early April, Sharief said.

Until the investigation is complete, which health officials predict will take a week or more, it's not certain that her death is related to the vaccine, the agency said.

Federal and state agencies paused the J&J vaccine rollout on April 13 due to concerns about blood clots.

"For most people that received the (J&J) vaccine, we are nearing the end of that time of where they need to be monitoring

for symptoms," Sharief said. The CDC warned that if people have symptoms within three weeks after receiving the vaccine they should contact their health care provider.

Federal officials already were examining six reports of the unusual clots, including a death, out of more than 8 million Americans given the one-dose vaccination so far.

The CDC also told Texas health authorities Thursday that a woman in that state was hospitalized with possible blood clots associated with J&J vaccine recipients.

A government advisory committee on vaccines is expected to meet Friday and

could make a recommendation soon after on whether and how to resume use of the J&J vaccine.

Sharief said whether Oregon resumes distribution of the J&J vaccine will be a "reflection" of the committee's decision.

"We have the utmost confidence that it would be a decision made with thorough investigation and consideration of the potential benefits and risks, in relation to each other, as we go through this pandemic," Sharief said.

Oregon sued for charging inmates for medical devices

Associated Press

PORTLAND — A class action lawsuit has been filed claiming the Oregon Department of Corrections is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act because it charges prisoners with disabilities for prosthetics and other medical devices they need.

The suit was filed this week in federal court by Portland attorney Lynn Walsh and nonprofit legal organization Disability Rights Advocates, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

The litigation aims to prevent the practice of charging people with disabilities in prison for health care appliances and durable medical equipment. In addition to preventing the practice in the future, the

plaintiffs want the state to reimburse people.

The lead plaintiff, Donald Terrill, is imprisoned at the Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario, and was fitted with a prosthesis after a lower leg amputation eight years ago.

Since 2013, the Department of Corrections has garnished Terrill's trust account. He's paid more than \$10,000 toward his own prosthetic leg and owes another \$14,000. He makes \$45 per month working in prison.

"Because I am being charged for my prosthesis, I cannot buy much beyond toothpaste and deodorant, or save up for shoes," Terrill said in a statement.

The corrections department acknowledged adults

in custody are "generally allowed" to buy their own medical equipment "like hearing aids and prosthetics."

"When AICs are released from custody, these items leave with the AIC because the equipment is not Department of Corrections property, but personal property," corrections spokesperson Jennifer Black said. The DOC supplies medical items such as canes, which can be returned and used again, she said.

Terrill requires the prosthetic limb to get around the Snake River prison, according to the lawsuit. Without it, he said, he wouldn't have access to the same programs and services in prison as inmates who are not disabled.

La GRANDE AUTO REPAIR
975-2000
www.lagrandeautorepair.com

Joe Horst

MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE
ACDelcoTSS

MAKE YOUR MONEY BLOOM
PLANT NOW. THANK YOURSELF LATER.

0.65% APY*

15 MONTH \$1K MINIMUM

Limited-time special
We cultivated this term savings special to help your money flourish.

Get growing today!
HZCU.ORG/SPRING21
800.852.5316

HORIZON CREDIT UNION
Your Path. Our Purpose.

*APY=Annual Percentage Yield. Insured by NCUA. Offer eligible to applicants residing in the Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon regions of Horizon Credit Union's geographical field of membership. Verification of residence location required upon membership application. Membership fee and restrictions may apply. Rates accurate as of 4/13/21 and are subject to change. Early withdrawal penalties apply. Membership fee and restrictions may apply. Rate shown is available for a limited time only and includes 0.25% APY bonus for members who establish monthly direct deposit of \$200 or more to a Horizon Credit Union checking account. APY without the bonus = 0.40%. New money only.