



Sean Nealon/Oregon State University

Oregon State University conducts COVID-19 testing at its Corvallis campus in this undated photo. OSU announced Tuesday, May 4, 2021, it will require students and staff to get COVID-19 vaccinations before fall term.

Oregon State University to require COVID-19 vaccines

Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Oregon State University announced it will require COVID-19 vaccinations before the fall term.

The university in Corvallis said Tuesday, May 4, students and employees who study and work onsite at the university's locations must be vaccinated.

"As we advance our plans to resume traditional on-site and in-person activities for the 2021-22 academic year, high rates of vaccination among our students, faculty and staff are needed to help improve the safety and well-being of our community," Interim President Becky Johnson said in a statement.

OSU's vaccination requirement plans were informed by state and federal guidance related to vaccines, advice from public health experts, and guidance from other organizations, such as the American College Health Association,

the statement said. Elsewhere in Oregon, the University of Portland, Willamette University, and Lewis and Clark College have also announced vaccine requirements as have the University of Washington and Washington State University.

Nationally more than 100 colleges and universities have announced vaccination requirements for students and/or employees, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Those counties are Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Wasco. Malheur County still is under the "moderate risk" designation, which is less restrictive.

"Gov. Kate Brown's decision to again lock down huge parts of Oregon has caused incredible frustration for many in my district, and I share their frustration."

— U. S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario



Bentz

Bentz slams governor over COVID-19 restrictions

By LILIANA FRANKEL
Malheur Enterprise

ONTARIO — Oregon U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz on Monday, May 3, called on Gov. Kate Brown to reverse her decision to impose tighter restrictions on 15 Oregon counties that require restaurants to close.

The governor last week announced 15 counties were moved into the "extreme risk" category under her COVID-19 metrics.

The state rules in that circumstance restrict indoor dining, as well as limiting attendance for gyms and churches.

Of the 20 counties that Bentz represents, eight are affected by the new restrictions.

Those counties are Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Wasco. Malheur County still is under the "moderate risk" designation, which is less restrictive.

"Gov. Kate Brown's decision to again lock down huge parts of Oregon has caused incredible frustration for

many in my district, and I share their frustration," said Bentz in a statement. "Today, nearly 70% of Oregon's older population is fully vaccinated and many communities across our state were well on their way to safely returning to some sort of

"I am calling upon Gov. Brown to reverse this unfortunate decision and focus her attention instead on vaccination and making sure that COVID aid sent to Oregon by the federal government be quickly allocated to those in need," he said.

Bentz, a Republican from Ontario, voted against the American Rescue Plan that Congress approved in March. The plan included \$28.6 billion for the Restaurant Revitalization Fund to help struggling restaurants and bars across the country.

Bentz noted while it might seem unusual for a national representative to comment on state affairs, "in recent days, the Oregon Health Authority actually invited public input from Oregon's congressional delegation."

Charles Boyle, deputy communications director for Brown, said that "our office and Oregon Health Authority hold a biweekly meeting with the congressional delegation. Those meetings are an open dialogue in which we receive feedback from them."

Owners get more time to rebuild after 2020 Labor Day wildfires

Bills pass Oregon House, also ease requirements for replacement homes and businesses

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Owners would get more time to rebuild homes and businesses destroyed in the 2020 Labor Day wildfires, without running afoul of planning requirements, under two bills that have cleared the Oregon House.

Both bills passed on 56-0 votes on Tuesday, May 4. One goes to the Senate, the other to Gov. Kate Brown.

House Bill 2289, which goes to the Senate, gives property owners five years — instead of the normal one year — to start reconstruction, which would not be considered a "land use action" under Oregon law. It applies in areas affected by wildfires under a state of emergency declared by Gov. Kate Brown between Aug. 1 and Sept. 30, 2020.

The Labor Day wildfires destroyed an estimated 4,000 homes. The largest concentration (about 2,500) was destroyed in the Alameda fire in Southern Oregon, but other fires were spread across Oregon.

Building permits are not usually considered land use actions.

But Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, said a work group he convened under the House Agriculture and Land Use Committee last fall after the wildfires anticipated the potential of legal challenges to reconstruction. Clem became chairman of the House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery this session.

"If this were deemed a land use decision, an angry neighbor could litigate,

some other group could litigate. What we are trying to do is give a safe harbor," he said.

"If you are rebuilding basically the same footage at the same location, it's not a land use decision ... and you can proceed with your rebuilding."

The bill sets a deadline of Sept. 30, 2025, for the start of reconstruction in these areas. It allows the square footage of replacement houses to be up to 10% more than the original. Structures do have to comply with building codes in effect in January 2008 or at the time of original construction, whichever is later.

Clem said the bill has an exception for reconstruction in federally designated floodplains, where the Federal Emergency Management Agency can set requirements for property owners to take part in the national flood insurance program.

It follows up House Bill 3272, which also cleared the House last week and went to the Senate. Under it, people who lost their homes in the 2020 Labor Day wildfires would get a minimum of two years under insurance policies to repair or rebuild, and other insurance protections.

On a percentage basis, Clem said, more homeowners (25%) are in the building permit process in Detroit than in Paradise, California, which was destroyed in 2018. However, the mid-2020 population estimate for Detroit — which is east of Salem — was 205, the same as in the 2010 Census. Paradise counted 26,800 people in 2010; it was barely 10% of that total in a 2019 count taken six months after the fire.

Nonconforming use reset

Senate Bill 405, which goes to the governor, re-

defines what a nonconforming land use is. For example, a retail store can operate in an area that has become a residential neighborhood.

Under current law, nonconforming uses can continue indefinitely — unless there is an interruption in that use, such as inactivity or abandonment of a property, for one year. The bill resets the one year to start once the governor lifts the state of emergency that caused the interruption.

For the coronavirus pandemic, Brown has imposed a state of emergency since March 2020 and renewed her order every 60 days. The latest order is scheduled to end June 28.

"It provides a little bit of breathing room to ensure that owners of nonconforming properties have the time needed to gather resources and begin construction," Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland, said. "Affected landowners want nothing more than to be back in place. Rebuilding is a marathon, not a sprint."

Marsh and Rep. Jami Cate, R-Lebanon, are from wildfire-ravaged areas.

"We've heard testimony from people feeling that their only hope of meeting this requirement is to choose a quicker option — whether that is pre-designed-building plans that don't quite fit their needs, or manufactured homes — rather than risk waiting for stick-built structures," Cate said.

"Let's give wildfire victims the time they need to navigate obstacles to rebuild their lives."

Marsh said a different section of the bill is intended to help organizations such as the Oregon Country Fair, which was unable in July 2020 to stage its three-day fair on its property in Veneta. The fair has announced that its July 2021 event also will be virtual.

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