

STATE BRIEFS

Oregonians could see \$1.9 billion ‘kicker’ next year

SALEM — Oregon could send out a massive \$1.9 billion “kicker” tax refund next year due to surging income tax receipts. Oregon Public Broadcasting reports if the projections hold, the refund — which takes the form of credits on 2021 tax returns filed next year — would be Oregon’s largest-ever kicker. The state’s kicker tax law sends money back to taxpayers whenever personal income tax revenues come in at least 2% above initial projections during a two-year budget cycle. The new projection was delivered to a joint meeting of state senators and representatives Wednesday, Aug. 25. In May, economic forecasters had anticipated the state would see a \$1.4 billion kicker.

Under the anticipated kicker, the median income taxpayer would receive a \$420 credit on this year’s state taxes. The average taxpayer, with an adjusted gross income of roughly \$67,500, would receive \$850. Since the kicker is awarded as a percentage of income taxes paid, the top 20% of earners stand to receive far more: between \$1,600 and \$16,880.

Separate from the personal kicker, the economists also expect the state to receive \$847 million more in corporate taxes than initially expected. That “corporate kicker” will flow to K-12 schools.

Asian giant hornet nest destroyed in Washington state

SPOKANE, Wash. — Officials in Washington state said Thursday, Aug. 26, they had destroyed the first Asian giant hornet nest of the season, which was near the town of Blaine along the Canadian border. The Washington state Department of Agriculture said it eradicated the nest Aug. 25. The nest was in the base of a dead alder tree in rural Whatcom County, about 2 miles from a nest the agency eradicated last October and about one-quarter mile from where a resident reported a live sighting of an Asian giant hornet on Aug. 11. The Asian giant hornets are sometimes called murder hornets because they prey on other bees. Asian giant hornets are the world’s largest hornet and are not native to North America. They can conduct mass attacks on honey bee hives, destroying the hive in a matter of hours. The hornets were first detected in the United States in 2019.

Experts: Oregon seems to be in ‘perpetual drought’

SALEM — Experts say Oregon is becoming less resilient to drought as fewer seasons of abundant rain and snow prevent it from bouncing back from hot and dry conditions. The Capital Press reported that Larry O’Neill, state climatologist at Oregon State University, says the current drought is “historically significant,” with about three-quarters of the state experiencing conditions considered “extreme” or “exceptional.” The state is in the fourth year of below-average precipitation, which has exacerbated the drought during “unprecedentedly” high temperatures this summer, O’Neill told the Oregon Water Resources Commission on Wednesday, Aug. 25. Parched soils were insufficiently recharged with moisture over winter and spring, which has harmed vegetative growth, including crops and forage, said Ryan Andrews, a hydrologist at the Oregon Water Resources Department, which is overseen by the commission. — The Associated Press

Lawmakers at odds over governor’s vetoes

Oregon Legislature won’t honor Brown’s decision to trim a bill passed last year

By DIRK VANDERHART
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Last year, as they worked to close an expected hole COVID-19 had created in the state’s budget, Oregon lawmakers bristled at Gov. Kate Brown’s decision to veto some of their decisions. Top lawmakers and budget writers were so incensed by the line-item vetoes, which they believed were unconstitutional, that they even considered taking Brown to court over the matter. But lawmakers didn’t

sue. Instead, they simply chose not to honor Brown’s decisions. In a move that surprised observers, the Legislature has behaved as if Brown didn’t issue vetoes at all. Lawmakers even passed two bills during the 2021 session that built upon language the governor had specifically sought to scrub from the books. Perhaps even more unexpected: Brown signed those bills. The actual policies at issue in this push-and-pull are the mundane stuff of state budgeting — highly

technical tweaks to the way assets flow through Oregon’s many accounts and subaccounts. But underneath those details are larger questions about the limitations of executive power in Oregon. The answers to those questions would need to come from Oregon courts, but neither side appears in a rush to get them. The Legislature and governor’s office have instead been content to let the contradiction linger, while both insist they are correct. “If the legislative branch questioned the Governor’s authority to veto these items, it could have brought a lawsuit to settle them,” Liz Merah, a spokesperson

for Brown, said in an email Monday, Aug. 23. “The legislature did not.” **‘The veto was not valid’** House Speaker Tina Kotek’s office offered a different take. “The issue is that the Governor took actions that the constitution does not authorize her to take in the first place,” spokesperson Danny Moran said. “The veto was not valid.” Under the Oregon Constitution, Brown has wide latitude to veto whole bills as she sees fit. But executive power is far more limited when it comes to deleting single items

from bills that are otherwise passed into law. This “line-item” authority is only granted for appropriations bills that spend public money, and for eliminating an emergency clause that would make a bill take effect immediately. Last year, following a special session to balance the state budget, Brown excised elements of two bills lawmakers had passed to save money. The governor said at the time she wanted to block some \$18 million in cuts to ensure state agencies had the funding they needed to battle historic wildfires that had ignited since lawmakers passed the policies.

How families spent their first child tax credit payments

BY ELLIOT NJUS
The Oregonian

SALEM — Millions of U.S. households, including more than 600,000 Oregon families, received payments last month through an expansion of the federal child tax credit. President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package inflated the value of the credit for most families, but it also included monthly checks or deposits to eligible families to hasten the cred-

it’s impact during the pandemic. The payments are actually an advance based on the government’s projections for next year’s tax returns. The first advance payments — up to \$300 per qualifying child younger than 5, and up to \$250 for children aged 6 to 17 — landed in mailboxes and direct deposit accounts in mid-July. Oregon families received \$173.2 million in July, according to the

Internal Revenue Service, with payments averaging \$425. So how did Oregon families use that cash? According to new survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the largest group — about 42% — used the money to pay down debt. Another 32% said they squirreled most of it away in savings. Only about 24% said they used most of it to make purchases. Those responses are similar to the rest of the country, according to the

survey. But the pattern is different from how Oregonians said they used their three rounds of stimulus payments in 2020 and 2021. Most spent the first of those payments right away, then put the next two into savings. The payments will continue through December, and how families spend their child tax credit payments could change over time as pandemic conditions shift, and with them the potential for more economic fallout.

Among Oregon families that reported they spent most of the child tax credit payments, most reported spending it on food. The funds also went to school tuition, programs and supplies; clothing; mortgage or rent; utilities or other bills; and child care. The American Rescue Plan increased the size of the credit, widened eligibility, and made it fully refundable for 2021, meaning families who owe no income tax can claim the full credit.

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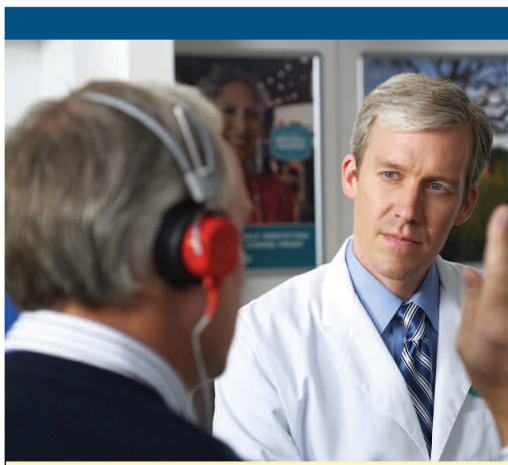
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