

# Roe v. Wade fate could impact Oregonians

By APRIL EHRLICH  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Last week, U.S. Supreme Court justices seemed they might side with a Mississippi law banning abortions after 15 weeks — or even overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision that legalized the procedures in the United States.

What does that mean for Oregonians' access to legal abortion?

Oregon codified its own version of Roe v. Wade protections with the Reproductive Health Equity Act of 2017. That law expanded reproductive health coverage to people regardless of their immigration status, and it required Oregon private health insurance plans to cover abortions with no out-of-pocket costs.

So if Roe v. Wade were overturned, Oregon would still have its own laws allowing abortions. But abortion rights advocates say many Oregonians — particularly those in remote, rural areas — will have diminished access to those services.

"We are seen as one of the most pro-choice states in the nation," said Christel Allen, executive director of Pro-Choice Oregon. "It does not mean that Oregon is a place where everyone is able to access care in their community, quality care, (or) care that's culturally informed. It does mean that as far as legal protections, we are sitting in a much better position of privilege than so many other states."

Twenty-one states — including Idaho, Oregon's neighbor to the east — are poised to automatically ban or severely restrict abortions if the Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade. Idaho cities like Boise or Meridian are currently the closest locations where many eastern Oregonians can access abortion services. The St. Alphonsus Medical Center in Ontario, which is on the Idaho border, doesn't provide abortions, as is the case with many other major medical clinics in Eastern Oregon, which are affiliated with religious groups that oppose the procedures.

Without access in Idaho, people in Ontario would need to drive three hours north to receive services in Washington or four hours west to Bend. Those locations might also get patients driving several more hours from Idaho.

The Idaho ban would include some exceptions, like in cases of rape or incest, or to save the mother's life. The law would take effect 30 days after a court decision.

Allen said Pro-Choice Oregon is promoting conversations around establishing telemedicine in remote areas like Eastern Oregon so patients can more easily access reproductive services remotely, whether through counseling or prescriptions for abortion pills.

"It's work that is so important now more than ever because we really are going to be a haven and a sanctuary for people who won't be able to get this type of care in their own communities and who will need to travel here," Allen said.

# Buehler endorses independent in governor's race

By GARY A. WARNER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Knute Buehler, the 2018 Republican nominee for governor, endorsed Sen. Betsy Johnson, who is running an insurgent independent campaign for governor in 2022.

Johnson's campaign released a "dear friends" letter from Buehler to past supporters on Tuesday.

"I am endorsing Betsy Johnson for Governor," Buehler writes. "Betsy's plain-spoken, independent spirit and proven record of putting the concerns of everyday Oregonians before partisan politics is exactly what Oregon needs right now."

The letter ends with a link to Johnson's campaign fundraising committee.

Buehler said the closed primaries of the Democratic and Republican parties would put candidates on the ballot who represented the most radical elements of their parties.

"It is vital that we break the iron grip monopoly of the radical left on power, politics, and policy in our state," Buehler said of Democrats.

Republicans would likely nominate someone



Buehler



Pamplin Media Group, File

Sen. Betsy Johnson, a moderate Democrat from Scappoose, announced Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021, she is running for governor in 2022 as an independent. Johnson's campaign on Tuesday, Dec. 7, released an endorsement letter from Knute Buehler, the 2018 Republican nominee for governor.

who Buehler believes would have little chance of appealing to most voters in Oregon, which has not elected a Republican as governor since 1982.

"Unfortunately, the Republican Party is no longer a viable alternative in Oregon," Buehler said.

### Running as an independent

Johnson's Nov. 8 announcement that she would run as an independent after 21 years in the Legislature as a Democrat was met with disapproval

by Democratic leaders. Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, stripped her of her co-chairmanship of the powerful Ways & Means Committee, the state's main budget-writing panel. Johnson remains a registered Democrat and retains her seat in the Senate.

Johnson has consistently been the most moderate of Democrats in the Senate. While backing most of her party's social issue stances, including support for abortion rights, she has voted with Republicans on issues

such as business restrictions, gun rights and limiting carbon emissions.

The Democratic and Republican nominees will be selected in the May 17, 2022 primary. Johnson then has to submit just over 24,000 valid signatures backing her candidacy to the secretary of state over the early summer to go directly on the Nov. 8 general election.

Buehler brings a long list of major donors to Johnson's campaign, which is already leads fundraising for 2021, with \$2.1

million in contributions, including several \$100,000 contributions from the timber industry and business owners. She currently has \$2.3 million in the bank.

The biggest question is whether Buehler's endorsement will bring in contributions from Nike's Phil Knight, who has not expressed a preference in the 2022 race. Knight was a major backer of Buehler.

The top Democratic fundraisers so far have been former New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, state Treasurer Tobias Read and House Speaker Tina Kotek.

Among Republicans, 2016 GOP governor nominee Bud Pierce has reported just over \$767,000 in contributions, with about half self-financed. Sandy Mayor Stan Pulkiam has raised \$575,000 and longtime GOP consultant Bridget Barton of Portland has received over \$491,000.

The latest entry in the GOP race, Rep. Christine Drazan, R-Canby, has raised over \$204,000, including money rolled over from her House campaign committee. She recently stepped down as House minority leader to concentrate on planning a formal campaign announcement early next year. She will retain her House seat.

# Oregon Health Authority director: 'We know almost nothing about omicron'

By LYNN TERRY  
Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — Scientists know little about omicron but they expect it to emerge in Oregon this week.

"We know almost nothing about omicron," Patrick Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority told the Oregon Health Policy Board on Tuesday, Dec. 7. He said there has been a lot of "supposition and speculation" in the media that is "well-informed" but not definitive.

He said the "emerging data points" are not enough to allow scientists to make any conclusions about omicron. "But those data points seem to indicate that it's more contagious, seem to indicate that it's less virulent, seem to maybe indicate that vaccines continue to be protective," Allen said.

But one problem is that a lot of the scientific information is coming from South Africa, which has a young population with a low vaccination rate.

The world has only known about omicron for about two weeks. Since it was first identified in southern Africa, it's been detected from Canada to Asia and Europe to Australia. It's also turned up

in dozens of U.S. states, including Washington and California.

This week, scientists working on Oregon State University's wastewater project, which has been tracking the spread of COVID across the state, will start to look for omicron in those samples.

Allen expects the new variant to be there.

"I would be shocked if we didn't have omicron turn up (there) or in regular sequencing," Allen said.

Regardless when omicron emerges, Allen said the state would persist in trying to get as many people vaccinated as possible.

About 73% of adults in the state have received two shots, and 23% have gotten a booster.

"We've seen pretty brisk uptake particularly in boosters," Allen said. "We're now up to 20,000 overall doses a day, including first doses, second doses and boosters."

The state has opened a dozen vaccine sites around the state in fairgrounds and other places that can administer up to 2,000 shots a day. Allen said these are focused on underserved communities that were hard hit by

the pandemic. "We're seeing good uptake there," Allen said. "Everything is about where we would expect it to be in terms of vaccination."

He also updated the board on the state's plan to offer a digital vaccine card, which will be voluntary. It will be offered to people to keep it on their phone to show where proof of vaccination is required.

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## COVID-19 Vaccine

**Drive Through Event Information:**

*Event date:* 12/5-12/10  
*Event times:* 10:00 am to 5:00 pm  
*Event Location:* 3604 N 2nd Street at the La Grande Fair Grounds Mt. Emily/4-H Building

**Vaccines offered:** 1st dose, 2nd dose, 3rd doses and booster vaccines. All Covid vaccine configurations will be available including pediatric vaccination.  
**Registration:** Will be completed at vaccine site

## CHD

[www.chdinc.org](http://www.chdinc.org)  
541-962-8800

**North Powder Vaccine Event:**

*Event date:* 12/8  
*Event time:* 10:00 am to 5:00 pm  
*Event location:* 333 G Street, North Powder Charter School, North Powder, Oregon 97867

**Vaccines offered:** 1st dose, 2nd dose, 3rd doses and booster vaccines. All Covid vaccine configurations will be available including pediatric vaccination.  
**Registration:** Will be completed at vaccine site

**Other vaccine events offered in December:**

*Location:* Center for Human Development  
*Time:* 10:00 am to 2:00 pm every Friday with the exception of New Year's Eve in addition to Christmas Eve.  
*Additional options:* Scheduled appointments available throughout the week.

**Vaccines offered:** 1st dose, 2nd dose, 3rd doses and booster vaccines. All Covid vaccine configurations will be available including pediatric vaccination. Other pediatric and adult immunizations also available at CHD.

**CDC General Vaccine Info:**

COVID-19 vaccines are effective  
COVID-19 vaccines are effective and can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Learn more about the different COVID-19 vaccines.  
COVID-19 vaccines also help children and adults from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19.  
While COVID-19 tends to be milder in children than adults, it can make children very sick, require hospitalization, and some children have even died. Children with underlying medical conditions are more at risk for severe illness compared to children without underlying medical conditions.  
Getting children ages 5 years and older vaccinated can help protect them from serious short- and long-term complications. Getting everyone ages 5 years and older vaccinated can protect families and communities, including friends and family who are not eligible for vaccination and people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

**Booster Information from CDC:**

Fast Facts Everyone age 18 and older is eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine booster beginning Nov. 20, 2021. Some people are strongly advised get a booster dose to protect themselves and others. You can choose which vaccine to get. The COVID-19 vaccines are extraordinarily effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death. That said, we are seeing immunity drop over time, especially in people over age 50 and those with compromised immune systems who are more likely to experience severe disease, hospitalization and death. For these people, another dose boosts their immunity, sometimes greater than what was achieved after the primary, two-dose series. Health experts strongly recommend people over age 50, people over 18 who live in long-term care facilities, and anyone who received one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine get a booster dose. Younger, healthy people may also get a booster dose to protect themselves and others. A booster will re-build neutralizing antibodies that strengthen the body's ability to fight getting a breakthrough case. Even if you're not at high risk, you could be infected and then pass it on to others, such as children too young to be vaccinated, the elderly, or people who are immunocompromised. Booster doses help people maintain strong immunity to disease longer. The first vaccine series built up the immune system to make the antibodies needed to fight the disease. Over time, the immune response weakens. A booster dose stimulates the initial response and tends to result in higher antibody levels that help people maintain their immunity longer. Boosters take about two weeks to bring up the immune response. This continues to be studied, but we can reliably say it takes two weeks to bring the immune response up to or better than that after the primary series.

## La Grande Gun Show

**2022** Presented by the Island City Lions Club

**"Locked & Loaded"**

**March 11-12-13, 2022**

**Friday vendor setup noon to 7pm**

**Sat 9 to 5 • Sun 9 to 1**

**Vendors Contact Kayla Hansen**  
**541-786-7210**  
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