

State misses Brown's million-booster goal for January

By **ROB MANNING**

Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority says the state fell well short of its January goal for booster shots.

Back in December, as the omicron variant of the coronavirus started to sweep through Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown set a goal to get COVID-19 booster shots in the arms of 1 million more people in the state by the end of January.

That was in addition to more than 945,000 people who had already gotten boosters before

Brown's Dec. 17 announcement.

But the state only got to 504,000 more — barely halfway to that million-booster target.

Oregon's vaccination and booster rates are higher than a lot of states. The state ranked eighth in the country for the highest rate of boosters, according to a health care website that analyzes federal data. Among fully vaccinated Oregonians, more than 48% have gotten boosters.

State health officials say that Oregonians are also "more faithful" to following COVID-19 protective measures, such as

wearing masks. Officials say those steps mean the omicron peak for hospitalizations is likely to not be as bad as initially forecast.

The projected peak of COVID-19-related hospitalizations amid the current surge is now estimated to be around 1,200. Just a week ago, forecast models showed that peak could be around 1,500 hospitalizations.

State health officials say without such widespread adherence to the safety protocols, the peak could have been as high as 1,900 COVID-19-related hospitalizations.



Dave Killen/The Oregonian, File

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown speaks at a Reopening Oregon celebration at Providence Park in Portland on June 30, 2021.

Kristof wants to bring 'accountability business' to Salem

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Following 35 consecutive years of Democratic governance in Oregon, Nick Kristof said he thinks he's the Democrat to turn the state around.

A former reporter, editor and columnist for The New York Times, Kristof spoke with the East Oregonian during a campaign swing through Eastern Oregon and the Columbia River Gorge. Kristof said his background in journalism gave him the "toolbox" to deliver on his campaign promises other Democrats failed to keep.

"I think that one of the problems in Oregon has also been a lack of accountability, and a tendency to pass grand measures that don't actually get implemented very effectively at the grassroots level," he said. "I'm in the accountability business."

But during the course of his 20-minute interview, Kristof only briefly touched on the policies he would want to enact should he be elected governor.

Poverty, homelessness



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Democrat Nick Kristof touts his journalism "toolbox" as providing him with the ability to deliver on campaign promises where other Democrats fail if he wins the race for Oregon governor.

and addiction are issues central to Kristof's campaign narrative. In Kristof's telling, he spent his journalistic career covering humanitarian crises around the globe only to realize similar crises were happening back in his hometown of Yamhill. That led Kristof and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, to write the 2020 book "Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope," which chronicles his former Yamhill classmates and their struggles in an economically declining area. Eventually, Kristof

decided to get off the sidelines so he could tackle these issues as governor.

He cited a glut of statistics on Oregon's pressing issues: Oregon ranked last in mental health services, according to Mental Health America; 23,000 children across the state were considered homeless; a state housing supply that was short 140,000 units.

Sticking to the topic of homelessness, Kristof had a number of ideas of what the state needed to do to reverse it. He recited a rapid-fire list of concepts he said already worked at the local level or elsewhere: turning more motels to emergency shelters, tiny home villages, improving the permitting process for new housing and creating incentives for homeowners to rent out excess rooms and living spaces.

"Many of these things are not perfect," he said. "This probably sounds too glib. These are hard problems, but they're not impossible. Other states have chipped away at them using some of these strategies."

While Kristof would need to find a way to fund these initiatives, he said

money wasn't the main factor in getting them done.

"In Oregon, the cost is not really the constraint," he said. "Especially in the Portland metro area, there's been a huge amount of money that has been allocated, so that is less of a constraint."

Should Kristof win the Democratic nomination and then the general election, he would be the first person in decades to hold the governorship without any previous experience in elected office at the local, state or federal level. Kristof compared himself favorably to Tom McCall, a former print and TV reporter who went on to win the governorship in the 1960s and shepherded lasting policies like public beaches and urban growth boundaries into law.

But McCall had run unsuccessfully for a U.S. House seat and served as Oregon secretary of state for two years before he was elected governor. The last person to be elected governor without any elected experience was Charles A. Sprague, who won the governorship in 1938. Sprague,

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— Nick Kristof, potential Democratic candidate for Oregon governor

also a former journalist, served a full term in Salem but his reelection campaign sputtered after he lost the Republican primary in 1942.

But the headlines that have dominated Kristof's campaign haven't been about his policies or profession. Instead, most attention has focused on his residency.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan on Jan. 6 determined Kristof did not meet the Oregon constitution's residency requirements to run for state office — namely, a candidate must have lived in the state for at least three years before the general election date. One of Fagan's key pieces of evidence is Kristof's voting history, which shows him voting

from New York in 2020.

Kristof appealed Fagan's decision to the Oregon Supreme Court, arguing he has a long public history of calling Oregon his home state and has maintained a home in Yamhill.

Kristof said he was confident the Supreme Court would rule in his favor and declined to say what he would do if the justices didn't. Kristof may not have lived his entire life in Oregon, but he said the state is "in my blood," and he's already committed to making it the place he's laid to rest.

"It's where my ashes will be scattered when I'm gone," he said, "on the family farm and maybe on the Pacific Crest Trail in Oregon."

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