

## STATE BRIEFS

## Oregon agriculture director nominated to serve in USDA

SALEM — Alexis Taylor, Oregon's Agriculture Department director, has been nominated by the Biden White House to serve in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

An announcement by the White House of nine nominees said Taylor had been appointed to serve as under secretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs in the department.

Since 2016, Taylor had led Oregon's Agriculture Department, a job that includes promoting the state's wide array of food and nursery products and regulating the \$50 billion industry. The state produces more than 220 agricultural products, spanning cattle, grass seed, cherries, hazelnuts and wine, and has 37,000 farms across 16 million acres.

The department declined to provide her age or comment on the appointment. It said she makes about \$15,000 a month.

The Oregon Farm Bureau congratulated Taylor as well, saying it was thrilled she won such a critical position in the USDA.

"Her decades of trade experience, strong leadership and steady hand will be an asset to the Biden administration as they attempt to improve domestic food security and prevent food shortages," Dave Dillon, executive vice president, said in a statement. "We know she will bring her knowledge and love of Oregon agriculture with her in this new role, and we can't wait to see what she can accomplish."

Taylor will have to be confirmed by the Senate.

## Federal prison escapee arrested

PORTLAND — A 38-year-old fugitive who escaped an Oregon federal prison camp in April has been captured in Nevada, according to U.S. Marshals.

Andrew Cain Kristovich had been staying in a tent in Carson City, Nevada, where officials also found a semi-automatic rifle, KOIN-TV reported on Friday, May 13.

Authorities said Kristovich escaped from the Federal Correctional Institution, Sheridan, on April 25 after hiding in bushes and crawling through a prison fence where he was picked up by his ex-girlfriend.

According to court documents, Kristovich was originally arrested by federal agents in 2018 on gun charges and a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl-laced imitation oxycodone pills.

## Remains found in missing man's submerged car

PORTLAND — Nearly a year after the former mayor of Cornelius went missing, authorities say the man's car has been found at the bottom of a river with human remains inside.

The vehicle belonging to 77-year-old Ralph Brown was found Friday, May 13, by a dive crew 40 feet below the surface of the Willamette River in Newberg, according to the Washington County Sheriff's Office. The human remains in the car have not yet been identified.

Brown was last seen leaving his Cornelius home in a Blue Nissan Sentra on May 16, 2021. Cellphone records indicated that he drove in circles for four hours within a 30-mile radius from home before he disappeared, KOIN-TV reported.

One of Brown's adult children was able to reach him on the phone the night he went missing but said he sounded confused and was unable to describe where he was. Brown was diagnosed with Alzheimer's a year before he went missing.

## GOP looks to end 35-year losing streak

By SARA CLINE

Associated Press/  
Report for America

SALEM — It's been 35 years since there was a GOP governor in Oregon, but political experts say this year the party has a rare opportunity to possibly win the state's highest elected position.

Oregonians are frustrated with the state of the state under Democratic leadership, and there's the possibility of a split in votes among the majority party as unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson makes a gubernatorial run and the absence of an incumbent this election as Gov. Kate Brown is term-limited.

"I think this is the best shot they've had in quite a few years," Christopher McKnight Nichols, an associate professor of history at Oregon State University, said of the GOP party's chances. "The clear logic is that if you've got a strong independent, and if they can pull enough Democrats, and you can hold enough Republicans in an election that requires a plurality, you may well be able to squeak it out."

In a time when many Oregonians are critical of the handling of the pandemic, homeless crisis, lack of affordable housing, increasing gun



Craig Mitchell/dyer/The Associated Press, File

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown talks with media after announcing the end of the state's COVID-19 restrictions in Portland on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. Brown has historically low approval ratings, which could play a factor in the 2022 gubernatorial race.

violence and growing urban and rural divide, Republican candidates say Democrats — who control the House, Senate and governor's seat — are to blame.

"Oregon cannot survive another four years of this," Republican candidate Christine Drazan said during her gubernatorial run announcement in January.

Brown has historically low approval ratings, which could play a factor in this gubernatorial race. Nichols believes if Democratic front runners — former Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek and state Treasurer Tobias Read — are linked to Brown, it could result in a scenario "where there's

just enough chipping away at the strongest Democrat in the race to make it quite competitive."

While Oregon is recognized as a blue state, known for the liberal city of Port-

land, some political experts say there is also a purple hue — with conservative rural swaths and unaffiliated voters.

The GOP front-runner among 19 candidates in the party primary is former Oregon House Republican leader Drazan. The Canby lawmaker was first elected in 2018 and became the minority leader the following year. Drazan has received support from her former colleagues, with more than three-fourths of Oregon's Republican state representatives endorsing her.

Drazan has leaned on her experience in the Legislature, noting that she has faced off against Gov. Brown and 2022 Democratic candidate for governor Tina Kotek, at times leading GOP walkouts to block progressive bills.

"I have been in the

trenches," Drazan said in January. "My experience makes me uniquely qualified to stand up for you and bring

change to our state."

Bob Tiernan, a lawyer and corporate consultant who served in the Legislature in the 1990s and chaired the Oregon Republican Party, has also stood out among other candidates. The Lake Oswego resident has touted his experience in both government and the private sector.

"Being governor requires being the Chief Executive over multi-billion-dollar bureaucracies with tens of thousands of employees," Tiernan said, as he kicked off his campaign in February.

"My professional background includes managing large multi-billion-dollar and million-dollar retailers with thousands of employees."



Drazan



Tiernan

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