



# LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

Northwest legislatures convene to debate COVID-19 fallout, climate change and budgets

**W**hen legislators in Oregon, Idaho and Washington state convene later this month, some will meet online and others will meet in their state capitol.

But the differences in the states' priorities will go beyond how the legislatures meet in response to COVID-19 concerns. Many of the policies they set — and the laws they pass — will impact farmers and ranchers across the Pacific Northwest.

In Washington state and Oregon, both governors are Democrats and the legislatures are led by Democrats. But while cap-and-trade climate policy is high on Washington Gov. Jan Inslee's priority list, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders will likely pivot toward other climate-related concerns such as renewable energy.

In the Republican-led Idaho Legislature, the top concern is what to do with a \$600 million budget surplus that has accumulated since last March, when COVID-19 prompted Gov. Brad Little, also a Republican, to put the brakes on state spending.

Following is a state-by-state rundown of legislative priorities that will impact agriculture.

## WASHINGTON: Governor embraces new term as 'magic moment'

OLYMPIA — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has taken his re-election as a mandate, calling the beginning of his third term "a magic moment of progress."

Inslee rejects scaling back his legislative agenda because of the pandemic, which will prevent constituents from entering legislative buildings. The Democratic governor has rekindled campaigns to tax carbon and capital gains, and gradually wring some of the carbon out of gasoline and diesel sold in the state.

"We have big things to do, and I think we're going to get them done. I'm excited about this session. I think the moment is a magic moment of progress on so many different things," Inslee said.

The Legislature will convene Jan. 11 for a 105-day session with Democrats holding solid majorities in the House and Senate. Committee hearings will be on Zoom, and lawmakers will vote by video.

Rep. Joel Kretz, a Republican who represents northeast Washington, said getting and staying online will be a problem for him and other rural lawmakers and residents.

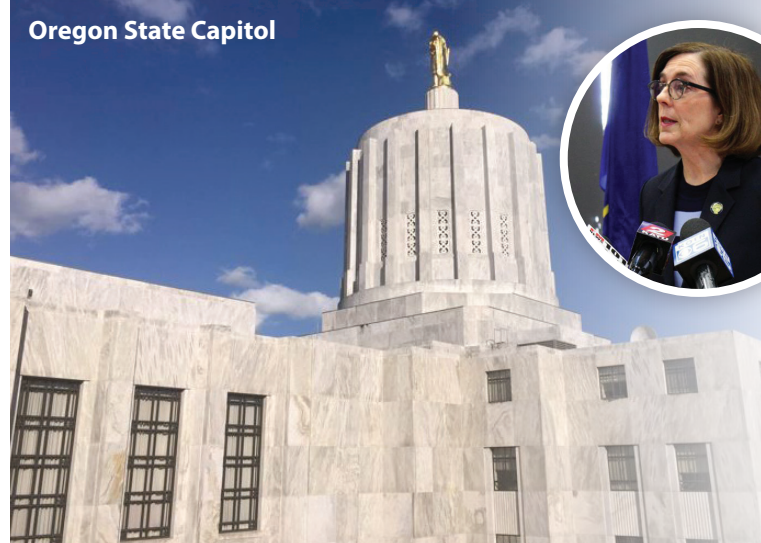
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Washington State Capitol



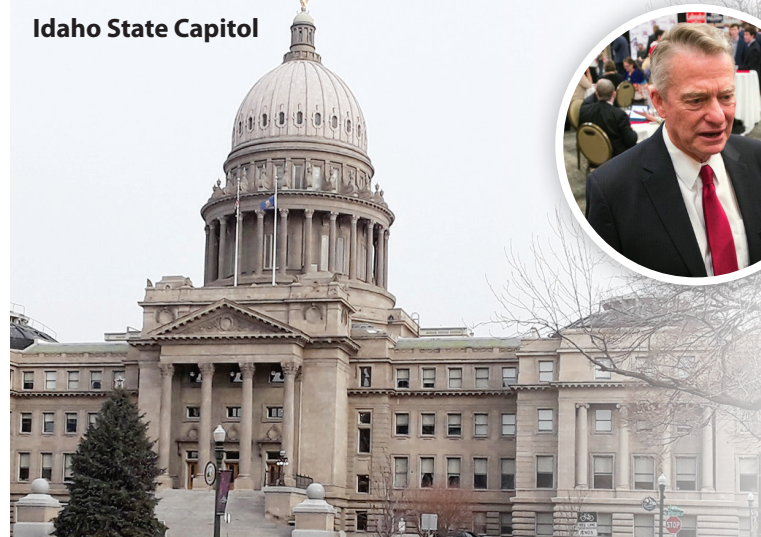
**GOV. JAY INSLEE REJECTS SCALING BACK HIS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC, WHICH WILL PREVENT CONSTITUENTS FROM ENTERING LEGISLATIVE BUILDINGS. THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNOR HAS REKINDLED CAMPAIGNS TO TAX CARBON AND CAPITAL GAINS.**

Oregon State Capitol



**GOV. KATE BROWN HAS PROPOSED SPENDING \$100.2 BILLION IN HER OVERALL BUDGET FOR THE 2021-2023 BIENNIUM, BUT LAWMAKERS TYPICALLY AMEND THAT AMOUNT. OF THAT, \$24.3 BILLION IS IN THE GENERAL FUND, WHICH COMES FROM TAXES. THE REMAINDER IS FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER SOURCES SUCH AS THE STATE LOTTERY AND FEES.**

Idaho State Capitol



**GOV. BRAD LITTLE, A REPUBLICAN RANCHER FROM EMMETT, IS SCHEDULED TO OPEN THE 2021 LEGISLATURE JAN. 11 WITH HIS STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS. HE WILL INCLUDE HIS PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL 2022, WHICH STARTS JULY 1.**

# Hammonds may get grazing rights back

By **ANDREW SELSKY**  
Associated Press

SALEM — The federal government has proposed awarding grazing allotments to an Oregon ranching family whose members were convicted of arson in a court battle that triggered the takeover of a federal wildlife refuge by right-wing extremists.

The Dec. 31 action by the Bureau of Land Management in favor of Hammond Ranches angered environmental groups.

Steven Hammond, co-owner of the ranch, and his father, Dwight, were convicted of arson for setting fire to range land and sent to prison for mandatory five-year sentences.

That in part led to the armed occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon for 41 days in 2016. One occupier was shot dead by Oregon State Police. They say he reached for a pistol at a roadblock.

President Donald Trump pardoned the Hammonds in 2018, allowing them to be freed from federal prison.

In a proposed decision on Dec. 31, the BLM said Hammond Ranches should be apportioned all available forage in the Bridge Creek area grazing allotments in the high desert of eastern Oregon, covering about 26,000 acres.

The federal agency cited the Hammonds' "extensive historic use of these allotments, past proper

use of rangeland resources, a high level of general need, and advantages conferred by topography."

But in 2014, when Barack Obama was president, the BLM denied Hammond Ranches a grazing permit renewal, saying it "does not have a satisfactory record of performance" and cited numerous incidents of arson.

At the Hammonds' trial, witnesses testified that a 2001 arson fire occurred shortly after Steven Hammond and his hunting party illegally slaughtered deer on BLM property. One said Steven Hammond handed out matches with instructions to "light up the whole country." The jury also convicted

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Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian via AP

**In this July 11, 2018, photo, rancher Dwight Hammond Jr., left, is embraced by his wife, Susie Hammond, after arriving at the Burns, Ore., Municipal Airport. Hammond and his son Steven, convicted of intentionally setting fires on public land in Oregon, were pardoned by President Donald Trump.**

# California ag groups challenge COVID-19 emergency temporary standards in court

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**  
Capital Press

LOS ANGELES — A coalition of California agricultural groups and business employers has filed a lawsuit in the Los Angeles Superior Court challenging the state's COVID-19 protocols.

Farm groups say the emergency

temporary standards, or ETS, they are challenging in court are unnecessary and harmful.

The California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board issued the standards on Nov. 30. Farmers say the standards create additional challenges for housing farmworkers, shift the burden of virus testing onto employers and impose

impractical requirements. Experts say the standards also take away regulatory flexibility from Cal/OSHA, the state's health and safety agency.

"They (the board) jammed this thing through around Thanksgiving and gave us little notice. We were scrambling to figure out what it was. Honestly, we're still trying to figure out what all it does. But we know it

hurts growers," said Michael Müller, director of government relations at the California Association of Winegrape Growers, one of the plaintiffs.

Other plaintiffs include the Western Growers Association, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Business Roundtable,

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