

Community Action Team has Assistance Programs to Help Right Now

*Local residents can apply for
funding assistance through local
not-for-profit*

By Scott Laird

Community Action Team (CAT) has announced they are accepting applications for rental and utility assistance from community members affected by the COVID-19 shutdown to help them access federal and state emergency funds.

CAT is currently in the process of distributing funds to their eligible households, and is encouraging people to apply for these much needed relief programs.

"If people are out of work, are having trouble getting their unemployment benefits, or are struggling in other ways, we really want them to apply," says CAT Executive Director Dan Brown. "This funding is really intended to meet the current immediate demand."

CAT is a not-for-profit corporation, serving Columbia, Clatsop, and Tillamook counties by connecting people with resources to help them become or stay self-sufficient and address the needs of the economically disadvantaged. CAT currently serves over 16,000 people annually.

CAT received a first round of emergency funding on May 20, about \$300,000, which has already mostly been distributed. The second round of funding, \$55 million across the state of Oregon, was announced on Friday, June 5. "We're excited to have a portion of this additional funding to help our local communities over the next few months," says Brown, noting that a lot of effort went into getting approval for the relaxed guidelines for how it can be distributed, including the help of State Senator Betsy Johnson.

Currently the state of Oregon has 14.4% unemployment. Across the three counties CAT serves, the numbers are high-

er: 15.4% in Columbia County, 18.4% in Tillamook, and 24.4% in Clatsop County (the second highest rate in the state). "Obviously there is a lot of need in the counties we serve," says Brown.

Eligibility requirements have been expanded and CAT will use the last 30 days of income as the base to allow more people to qualify for household assistance. "This will allow us to serve, not just our traditional clients and demographics, but those in the work force who have been out of work for a few months or affected by the shutdown, especially the self-employed and small business owners," says Brown. "It's a big difference in who it allows us to expand services to," adds CAT Housing Program Manager Heather Johnson.

Johnson encourages anyone who is in need of assistance to apply, regardless of income levels. "We don't want anyone to assume they don't qualify, because we always want to be able to talk to them," she says. "We have funds right now they might not have normally been eligible for."

In addition to housing and utility assistance, CAT also provides senior services assistance, healthy family support, and community investment programs.

Brown notes that, regardless of what program people apply for assistance through, CAT always reviews the applications with an idea there might be other programs they could be eligible for. "Getting them in to apply is the first critical step," says Brown. "Our case managers are trained to make referrals to other programs within our agency and get them connected to the funding they need."

*For more information contact:
Community Action Team (CAT) – Columbia
County - 503-397-3511
Clatsop Community Action (CCA) –
Clatsop County - 503-325-1400
Community Action Resource Enterprise
(CARE) – Tillamook County - 503-842-
5261*

Oregon Group Pushes Change to Redistricting

*Ballot initiative proposes
citizen commission rather
than legislature to redraw
district boundaries*

By Scott Laird

A few weeks ago you may have received an envelope in the mail from a group called People Not Politicians which contained a petition they asked you to sign and return. Were you unsure what this mailing was about? Here's some information.

People Not Politicians, a statewide coalition, is collecting signatures in an attempt to place a measure on the November 2020 ballot which would change the way Oregon conducts its redistricting process. The group has set a July 2 deadline to return petitions.

Redistricting is how new congressional and state legislative district boundaries are drawn. Each of Oregon's five United States Representatives and 90 state legislators are elected from political divisions called districts. United States Senators are not elected by districts, but by the state at large. District lines are redrawn every 10 years following completion of the United States Census. The federal government stipulates that districts must have nearly equal populations and must not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity.

In the past Oregon's Legislature has been given the responsibility for drawing both congressional and state legislative district lines, and has used several different methods to try and accomplish the task. Only twice since 1911 has the Oregon legislature passed a redistricting plan that became the final adopted plan. Oregon is projected to gain a sixth U.S. Congressional

seat because of population growth; Oregon has not added a Congressional seat since 1982.

The ballot initiative proposed by People Not Politicians would create an independent, citizen-led commission made up of 12 members – four Democrats, four Republicans, and four people who are unaffiliated with either party. Incumbent politicians, lobbyists, or political operatives would not be allowed on the commission.

According to the proposed initiative, the Commission must hold at least 10 public hearings. At least one hearing is required in each congressional district and at least one in each of Oregon's regions: coastal, Portland, Willamette Valley, southern, central, and east of the Cascades. Seven votes will be needed by the Commission to approve the redistricting map; at least one vote from each group (Democrat, Republican, unaffiliated) will be needed.

Redistricting reform is not a new idea. Seven states – Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, and Washington have independent citizen redistricting commissions, while three other states – Missouri, Ohio, and Utah have passed redistricting reforms. Citizens in Nevada are also currently attempting to reform their redistricting process.

Redistricting has been a contentious issue between Republicans and Democrats in Salem in the past. In 1991 the legislature could not agree on a plan, and the job fell to Democratic Secretary of State Phil Keisling, whose plan incorporated public input and was praised by Republicans and grudgingly accepted by Democrats. In 2001 the process was especially difficult as

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It's Time to Listen: Reflections on Three Weeks of Civil Unrest

*The power of protest
proves change can happen*

By Scott Laird

America is struggling with itself. With its history of systemic racism and oppression. With police brutality, accountability, and injustice. With civil unrest and how we protest. With how we ask difficult questions, and talk to and listen to each other.

At first many of us were shocked by the video clip of the Minneapolis police officer kneeling on George Floyd's neck until he died, but that quickly turned to outrage, confusion, and heartbreak. Outrage at the ongoing injustice. Confusion at the backlash of rioting and destruction that

broke out in cities across the country. And heartbreak, because, here we are again, as a nation, confronting the ugly reality of our white supremacist culture. While the Civil Rights protests of the 1960s exposed America's racist roots, as a culture we are still struggling, 50 years later, to examine and fully confront it as it continues today.

The violent reaction, the ensuing riots, and the persistent calls for action and structural change following the death of George Floyd caught many of us by surprise. But this is a response to a much deeper wound, an accumulation of injuries. After centuries of oppression and decades of economic hardship, coming on the heels of the

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