

# State budget hangs on May revenue forecast

The quarterly numbers could shape spending

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — While lawmakers are now likely negotiating the state's budget behind closed doors, Oregonians may have a better idea of what to expect once state economists present the quarterly revenue forecast in mid-May.

Legislators are required to pass a balanced budget, but face an approximately \$1.6 billion shortfall between what the state expects to bring through the general fund and lottery funds, and what it would take to maintain existing services.

Between those two funds, available revenue is expected to be about \$20.9 billion, according to the most recent quarterly revenue forecast, which was issued in February.

According to state Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, one of the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, which writes the state's budget, the forecast that comes out May 16 gives budget writers "the most accurate picture" of what's to come, once most income tax returns have been filed.

The state's general fund is largely sourced from income taxes.

With both budget cuts and new taxes still in the realm of possibility — and with both options imbued with political consequences — state lawmakers could turn to a strategy they've tapped in the past: establishing a bicameral "super committee" to hammer out big-

ticket policy items.

Such super committees, though not common, have emerged in prior legislative sessions. They can form when legislators think it could "help break down some of the institutional barriers" between the House and Senate, said Jim Moore, professor of political science and director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University.

Such a mega-committee could include party leadership from both sides of the aisle from each chamber, and possibly members of key policy committees — such as health care or education — Moore said.

But if the legislative session starts in February, why isn't there more public information about what the budget will actually be until three months later?

"When you come out with a budget, you're, in effect, making promises," Moore said. If not all of them can be kept, lawmakers "just don't want to go that far."

Oregon passes its budget in increments, with the biggest components of the budget typically coming first.

Once the most significant pieces of the budget are passed — such as education, public safety and human service programs — budgets for smaller agencies and programs fall into place, Moore said.

This session, lawmakers are also trying to craft a transportation funding package. Health care costs are another significant challenge for the state as the federal government gradually tapers its support to states for Medicaid expansion.

*The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

# Early quake warning system expands to Oregon, Washington

Associated Press

SEATTLE — An early warning system for earthquakes has been expanded to Oregon and Washington state, joining California in testing a prototype that could give people seconds or up to a minute of warning before strong shaking begins.

The system isn't ready to issue public quake warnings yet, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, which has been working with university partners to develop the ShakeAlert system.

But this version allows early adopters in Oregon and Washington state to begin using the early signals to figure out what they need to do in the event of an earthquake. Such pilot projects are helping to make the system more reliable and pave the way for broader use.

Officials with USGS, the University of Washington and others held a news conference Monday in Seattle to announce the system's roll out across the West Coast. California has been testing the production prototype since early 2016.

Even a few seconds of advanced notice can help people to duck and cover or cities to slow trains, stop elevators or take other protective measures, agency officials say.

In Washington state, a Seattle area firm RH2 Engineering



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Students at Seaside High School participate in The Great Oregon ShakeOut quake drill.

has signed on as a pilot user to test the system to prevent water tank spills, The Seattle Times reported. The firm develops municipal water and sewage plants and hopes to use the system to be able to close valves in the event of an earthquake.

"The advantage of earthquake early warning is that it gives us forewarning that the shaking will occur, and we can be sure the valve is fully closed by the time the shaking starts," the firm's Dan Ervin told the newspaper. The company is

working on software and hardware to process the warning signals and automatically close valves.

The early warning system detects earthquakes using a network of ground motion sensors. The amount of warning time depends on distance from an earthquake's epicenter. Locations very close to the epicenter may not get any warning, but others farther away could get anywhere from seconds to minutes.

The University of Oregon is working with the Eugene Water & Electric Board, Oregon's largest public electric and water utility service, to install sensors on its hydroelectric facilities, canals and water treatment plant, the Daily Astorian reported.

The USGS says it will cost \$38.3 million in capital investment to complete the ShakeAlert system so that it can begin issuing alerts to the public. It will cost about \$16.1 million each year to operate and maintain it.

# Pacific sardine fishery closed for commercial season

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — Federal fishery managers voted Monday to keep the U.S. West Coast Pacific sardine fishery closed for the upcoming commercial season.

This will be the third year in a row there have not been enough sardines to support a fishery.

Sardines were a thriving

fishery on the West Coast from World War I through World War II. But their numbers, and the fishery, crashed in the late 1940s.

The conservation group Oceana lauded the decision.

Oceana officials say leaving more sardines in the water before fishing is allowed to occur will help ensure there is enough of

the critical food for wildlife while allowing the sardine population to rebuild more quickly.

Much of the catch,

landed from Mexico to British Columbia, is exported to Asia and Europe, where some is canned and the rest goes for bait.

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