

County unemployment at 3.6 percent in June

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County recorded a 3.6 percent unemployment rate in June, according to the Oregon Employment Department, the seventh-lowest rate of Oregon's 36 counties.

Unemployment in the county was slightly higher than last month, but 1.4 percent lower than a year ago, slightly lower than the statewide rate (3.7 percent) and nearly 1 percent lower than the national rate (4.4 percent).

The county lost 110 non-farm jobs compared with one year prior, largely in the retail sector.

"A preliminary look at some new data suggests that the retail trade employment estimate may be revised upward significantly next month to show a gain over the year," regional economist Erik Knoder wrote in a release from the state about the county's employment. "This could well result in an overall gain in jobs over



Area	June 2017	May 2017	1-yr. ago
Clatsop	3.6	3.5	5
Columbia	4.5	4.5	6.4
Tillamook	3.8	3.7	5.2
Oregon	3.7	3.6	5.1
U.S.	4.4	4.3	4.9

*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates. Source: Oregon Employment Department

Daily Astorian graphic

the year in the county, and it is more in keeping with the growth evident in related industries."

Over the past year, the hospitality industry added 120 positions, along with 80 positions each added by education/health services and construction. Manufacturing lost 130 jobs, and local government education cut 90.

Mushen steps down from Port Commission

Applications due by Aug. 9

By EDWARD STRATTON

The Daily Astorian

Robert Mushen resigned from the Port of Astoria Commission Tuesday, opening a position on the five-member governing body for interviews next month.

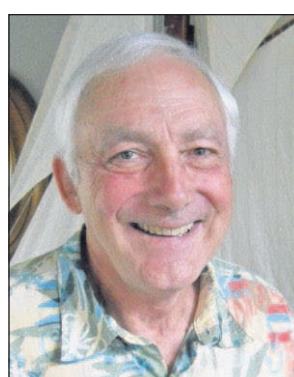
Mushen, the president of the Port Commission through many tense and adversarial meetings, suffered a blood pressure spike during one meeting in April and had to be taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital.

"I spent ... two weeks in the hospital," he said. "Two months afterward, I was in physical therapy learning how to walk again."

"But I am very grateful to report that I am entirely recovered, thanks to a team of neurologists," Mushen said before being drowned

'I am very grateful to report that I am entirely recovered, thanks to a team of neurologists.'

Robert Mushen
former Port of Astoria commissioner who resigned because of health reasons



Robert Mushen

In other action, the Port Commission approved contracting with accounting firm TKW for auditing services.

Commissioners also approved an easement for Pacific Power to install utility poles along the Port's property in Warrenton.

out by applause. "Everybody who has taken care of me has required I resign my commission, and I do so with great sadness."

But Mushen said he was encouraged by the makeup of the Port Commission, which includes newcomer and President Frank Spence, fellow newcomer Dirk Rohne and veterans Bill Hunsinger and James Campbell.

"The voters of Clatsop County have returned to us a very excellent board of commissioners," he said. "They have chosen an excellent president."

After his announcement early in the meeting, Mushen left the room to standing applause. Campbell said Mushen has been an asset to the community and served the Port well. Spence said his calm, rational demeanor would be missed.

Spence said any registered voter in Clatsop County can apply with a letter of interest and resume to 1 Pier St, Suite 308, in Astoria. Applications are due by noon Aug. 9, with interviews taking place later in the month.

Secretary of state accused of conflict in provider tax repeal

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — The Oregon Nurses Association has accused Secretary of State Dennis Richardson of having a conflict of interest in a proposed ballot measure to repeal a health care tax plan.

The association has asked to Richardson, who oversees all statewide elections, to disclose any and all political and financial ties he has with state Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn. Parrish is spearheading the repeal initiative and is a political consultant paid by the Richardson campaign. The association also demanded that Richardson recuse himself from any business involving the proposed repeal.

"It is unusual and possibly unprecedented for a sitting secretary of state and a state legislator who is also a political consultant and chief petitioner of a referendum, which the secretary will oversee, to have significant financial ties," the association stated in

a Monday letter to Richardson. "This combination of personal, political and financial connections poses a potential conflict of interest that the Secretary of State's Office must immediately address."

Richardson said the association's "allegation of conflicts of interest are specious and unfounded."

"I am committed to fairness to all and favoritism to none in the conduct of Oregon elections," Richardson said in a statement Monday. He added that his staff in the elections divisions "are fair and unbiased."

Richardson reported payments to Parrish's political consulting firm of nearly \$330,000 during his campaign for secretary of state. His campaign continues to pay Parrish a \$1,000 monthly retainer for political consulting services, the association noted. Parrish's firm also donated more than \$20,000 to Richardson's campaign.

Parrish claimed the association's accusations of a conflict of interest are politically motivated. She noted that Rep. Rob Nosse, D-Portland, who sits on the legislative committee that sponsored the health care tax plan, is an employee of nurses association. The association "spent thousands of dollars to seat" Nosse and



Dennis Richardson

political action committee board member Rep. Sheri Malstrom, D-Beaverton. "It's unfortunate to see the Oregon Nurses Association bring politics to a new low," Parrish said in a statement Monday.

The Legislature enacted the \$550 million health care tax plan as a way to offset a \$1.4 billion shortfall in the state's two-year budget. Lawmakers from both parties supported the tax scheme, saying it would allow thousands of low-income residents to remain in the state Medicaid program.

The plan hikes taxes on

hospitals and levies a new tax on health insurance plans. Gov. Kate Brown signed the legislation into law this month.

Parrish said the nurses association benefits from the legislation because there is an exemption from the insurance tax for unions that self-insure.

Rachel Prusak, a Portland nurse practitioner and member of the association, said the association wants all of the correspondence and other documents showing a relationship between Richardson and Parrish to be available for public viewing. She said the letter sent Monday was not a formal public records request, but such a request could be a secondary measure if Richardson doesn't publicize the records on his own accord.

"We shouldn't have to do a public records request for the secretary of state to be transparent," Prusak said.

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

Taxpayers sue Oregon jail over immigrant holds

By STEVEN DUBOIS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A jail in north-central Oregon has been sued by four people who contend the facility is violating its state law by holding immigrants who are awaiting status hearings or deportation.

The four assert in a lawsuit filed Friday in northern Wasco County that they have paid and continue to pay property taxes used to build and operate the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional

Facility in The Dalles. They alleged the jail is breaking a unique Oregon law prohibiting state and local authorities from helping federal authorities enforce immigration laws.

Oregon created America's first sanctuary state in 1987. In February, Gov. Kate Brown signed an executive order that said all state agencies must follow the 1987 statute.

In addition to the jail, the suit names Wasco County. Its attorney, Kristen Campbell, said the county and the jail

have complied with state law.

The attorney who filed the lawsuit, David Henretty of the Oregon Law Center, declined comment and said the four plaintiffs had no immediate comment about the case.

The jail generally referred to as NORCOR opened as a regional jail for four rural counties. As with many other

local jails, it has a contract with the U.S. Marshals Service to provide beds for federal detainees.

The focus of the lawsuit is the immigrants overflowing to Wasco County from an U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement detention facility in Tacoma, Washington.

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