

# Four laws that made an impact in 2017

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau

Many of the hundreds of laws Oregon legislators pass each year may go largely unnoticed by the public.

Here are four recent laws that left a palpable mark on the lives of Oregonians in 2017.

## Distracted-driving restrictions

Oregon's new distracted-driving law closed loopholes in a preexisting ban on holding a cellphone while driving and enhanced penalties for violations. House Bill 2597 expanded the ban to include holding any mobile electronic device while driving, even while waiting at a stoplight. Drivers face a fine of up to \$1,000 for their first offense.

Less than a month after the law took effect Oct. 1, Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn — who voted for the law — was pulled over and fined \$265 for using her cellphone while driving.

She was using the phone to get directions to the KATU studio in Portland, where she was scheduled to give an interview, she said.

“Old habits die hard for those of us who were introduced to cellphones before there were specific laws related to distracted driving and phone use,” Parrish said. “It might be difficult for people to break a years-long habit of driving and using a cellphone, but it’s a



Some of Oregon's hundreds of new laws were more palatable than others in 2017.

habit I never want my kids to start.”

Nearly 3,500 people were killed and about 391,000 injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in the United States. In 2015, according to the most recent statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“We all share the roads, and we have an obligation to keep each other safe,” Parrish said.

## Pumping your own gas in Eastern Oregon

Oregon is one of only two states in the nation where residents are prohibited from pumping their own gas. While this may seem to be a luxury for some urban dwellers, it has been a source of consternation for motorists and gas station owners in rural parts of Eastern Oregon.

In Heppner, for instance, there is only one gas station

in town, and it isn't open 24 hours a day.

During hunting season, the line of motorists waiting for the gas station to open sometimes extended four blocks down Main Street, said Heppner resident LeAnn Wright, an office support specialist for the Morrow County Juvenile Department.

Two years ago, the Legislature passed a bill to allow self-fueling between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. in certain rural counties, to prevent travelers from being stranded overnight. Earlier this year, lawmakers expanded the timeframe for self-fueling to 24 hours in 15 Eastern Oregon counties, with populations of less than 40,000. The expansion of the law was primarily designed to keep solo gas stations such as Heppner's in operation. Some stations were in jeopardy of going out of business because owners couldn't afford to hire

enough pumping attendants, said Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, the bill's sponsor.

Stations are still required to have at least one attendant between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., but customers could pump their own gas if the attendant is busy and a cardlock machine is available.

“Now, I think a lot of that impact is off because (motorists) don't have to sit and wait for someone to pump their gas so they flow through a little better,” Wright said.

## Minimum wage

The state's landmark law to increase in the minimum wage for seven consecutive years was enacted in 2016, but the greatest jump in wages happened in 2017.

Minimum hourly pay in the Portland metro area climbed from \$9.75 to \$11.25 in July of this year, after a 50-cent increase last year. The minimums were lower in other parts of the state, an acknowledgement from lawmakers of the variety of economic realities and cost of living in different parts of the state.

Rep. Janelle Bynum, D-Happy Valley, who owns four McDonalds franchises in the Portland area, supported the minimum-wage hike, despite the added cost to her business.

“I'm going to be honest here. It is hard,” Bynum said of balancing the increase in payroll with her family expenses.

“Life in the Portland metro area continues getting harder for people with entry- to mid-level wages, so it's good that raising the minimum wage helped give some relief to working families.”

However, Bynum said raising the minimum wage fails to address the root cause of why so many families are struggling to make ends meet: the cost and availability of housing.

## Full-day kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten began in Oregon in 2015, thanks to

funding approved by the Legislature, but the law continues to have ripple effects, both for children's long-term education and families' short-term financial outcomes.

For instance, students in full-day kindergarten are more likely to read proficiently in the third grade, a critical benchmark for reaching on-time graduation in high school, Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, has said.

Plus, the longer children are in school, the less childcare parents have to pay for or work they have to miss.

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**THE DAILY ASTORIAN**

## U.S. hops set records

By **DAN WHEAT**  
EO Media Group

YAKIMA, Wash. — U.S. hop growers set new records in acreage, volume and value in 2017 and for the first time Idaho surpassed Oregon in annual production.

While the rate of growth of craft breweries has been slowing and inventories of hops have been increasing, the 2017 totals may not be peaks.

Acreage likely will increase slightly in 2018, more fields planted in recent years will come into production and some acres will shift from aroma into high alpha varieties at generally much higher yields, said Pete Mahony, vice president of supply chain management and purchasing for John I. Haas, a major processor and grower in Yakima.

“It's simply difficult to slow a fast moving train. It might take a couple of years yet for the brakes to engage,” Mahony said.

Growth of craft breweries has fueled the increase of aroma variety hops in recent years but inventories have been increasing reflective of supply catching up with demand as the rate of craft brewery growth has slowed. On Sept. 1, U.S. hop stocks were 98 million pounds, up 15 percent from a year earlier.

In 2017, U.S. hop production totaled a record 104 million pounds, up 20 percent from the 2016 crop of 87.1 million pounds, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics report issued Tuesday.

Acres harvested were a record 53,282, up 5 percent from the prior record of 50,857 in 2016. Value of production was a record \$618 million, up 24 percent from the record high of \$498 million in 2016.

Harvested acres increased 24 percent in Idaho, 3 percent in Washington state and 1 percent in Oregon. U.S. yields were 1,959 pounds per acre up from 246 a year ago.

The industry anticipated a large crop given June acreage estimates and good growing conditions and ample water contributed to above average yields in most varieties, Mahony said.

The 104-million-pound record surpassed No. 2 Germany which had 91 million pounds and below average yields, he said.

Washington state remains the U.S. hop gorilla with 75 percent (78.6 million pounds) of production, 38,438 acres and \$498 million in production value.

Idaho accounted for 13 percent (13.7 million pounds) of

production, 6,993 acres and \$68.7 million in value.

Oregon was 11 percent (11.9 million pounds) of production, still led Idaho in acres at 7,851 but trailed in value at \$59.5 million.

“The U.S. crop was nearly all contracted at good prices still in place from the craft bull market,” Mahony said. While production costs, particularly labor, continue to rise, 2017 contract prices remained strong, he said.

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