

Gas tax bump, fee hikes among new laws

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau



EO Media Group

Oregon's gas tax goes up to 34 cents a gallon today, a hike of 4 cents. The tax increase is part of a host of laws that take effect with the start of 2018.

The Oregon Legislature passed about 750 bills in 2017, many of which take effect today. Here are some highlights of new laws that Oregonians may notice in the new year:

Gas tax
Lawmakers approved a package of new taxes and fee increases designed to fund \$5.3 billion in transportation projects over the next several years.

The one Oregonians may feel most is a hike in the gas tax, up 4 cents to 34 cents per gallon. Employees will see a new payroll tax deduction on

their paychecks of 0.1 percent. Oregon also will debut the nation's first bicycle tax. New bicycle sales will be taxed a flat rate of \$15, when the bicycle has a wheel diameter of 26 inches or more and a price of \$200 or greater. New

vehicle sales will be taxed 0.5 percent. Car registration fees will rise by \$13 to \$43 and title fees by \$16 to \$93.

21 to buy tobacco

Oregon will become the fifth state to increase the age to legally buy tobacco and vaping products to 21. The law imposes harsh penalties for clerks and store owners who violate the law.

Smoking-related diseases are a leading cause of death of Oregonians, and advocates say the new law will reduce the number of teenagers who take up smoking and prompt some existing smokers to try to quit. Oregon offers one free session of smoking cessation counseling through the

Oregon Tobacco Quit Line, 1-800-784-8669.

Expanded bottle bill

Oregon's bottle bill, which allows people to redeem a 10-cent deposit when they return empty beer, water or soda bottles or cans, will expand to bottled and canned coffee, tea, kombucha, hard cider, fruit juice and other beverages.

Wine, distilled spirits, animal- and plant-based milk and meal replacement products still aren't part of the redemption program.

Move over law

Drivers have been required to move out of the lane when an emergency vehicle is pulled

over on that side, but beginning today, the law requires motorists also to move over when any vehicle is parked or idling on the shoulder.

Gun-removal orders

Another new law gives families a legal tool to remove loved ones' access to firearms if they pose a risk to themselves or others. The law is designed to prevent suicides and mass shootings.

A family member or cohabitant may seek an extreme risk protection order from court for a period of 12 months, during which time the person who is a danger would have their firearm confiscated. The order could be contested and would need to be renewed annually.

Study: Wildfire smoke contributes to thousands of deaths each year

By **ANNA BOIKO-WEYRAUCH**
Northwest News Network



Tristan Fortsch/KATU

Wildfires, like the Eagle Creek Fire last year, pose a threat to human health.

The wildfires that burned through the Pacific Northwest this past summer caused hazy skies throughout Washington state and Oregon. Air pollution from tiny particles released by fire is a known health hazard.

New research from Colorado State University is trying to quantify the effect on human health.

Colorado State Associate Professor Jeffrey Pierce said the threat to human health will increase as warmer global temperatures contribute to more wildfires.

"The hypotheses here is that warmer spring tempera-

tures lead to earlier snow melt, warmer summer temperatures can dry out the wood even more and you can get even more fires," he said. The new study estimates smoke from wildfires contributes to 25,000 deaths per year

around the world. It predicts the number will triple by the end of the century as warmer global temperatures lead to more fires in the West, Southwest and Canada.

But researcher Katelyn O'Dell said the death toll doesn't tell the whole story. She told a recent gathering of scientists that the short-term health effects are much wider.

"Things like kids missing school, people missing work, people having asthma attacks would affect a larger part of the population, so the impact of smoke exposure is probably a lot greater than we're even seeing," O'Dell said.

A University of Houston study estimates a lower

death toll — around 5,000 deaths per year from 2011 to 2014.

The Washington state Department of Ecology is

reviewing air quality and health data from recent wildfires and expects to release a final report and interactive map early next year.

Seattle settles lawsuit over abuse claims against ex-mayor

By **MARTHA BELLISLE**
Associated Press

Heckard as well as many survivors," she said.

Heckard's lawyer, Lincoln Beauregard, said Sunday that his client appreciates and accepts the city's offer. He says the case was never about money but the funds will help Heckard in his recovery.

Murray continues to deny the allegations and in a statement said the relief of putting the case behind him is bittersweet, "tempered by the painful experience

we have all undergone."

"The lawsuit was painful for me, my husband, my family and my former staff because the allegations were untrue," Murray said. "I did not molest or have any sexual contact with the plaintiff. I was prepared to defend myself in court, as I have been doing at my own expense, but wholeheartedly agree with the city's decision to pay \$150,000 to avoid the cost and uncertainty of litigation."

Murray had built his stand-

ing in the gay community and in Washington state politics through a decadeslong push for bias protections, domestic partnerships and marriage equality. His departure brought an end to a 22-year career in public office, including 18 years as a state lawmaker.

SEATTLE — Seattle has settled a lawsuit filed by a man whose sexual abuse claims effectively ended the political career of former Mayor Ed Murray.

City Attorney Pete Holmes announced late Saturday that the city will pay Delvonn Heckard \$150,000 to resolve the lawsuit, which, along with accusations by others, led to Murray's resignation in September.

The lawsuit claimed Murray raped and molested Heckard as a teen. It also blamed the city for enabling the Democrat to use his political office to slander Heckard and others for months as the mayor denied the allegations. The AP typically does not identify alleged victims of sex abuse, but Heckard said he wants his name made public.

"With this settlement, the city takes an important step in putting this sad chapter behind us, limiting litigation expenses and allowing Mr. Heckard to move forward with his life," Holmes said in a statement.

Newly elected Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, a former U.S. attorney, said settling the suit will let the city begin to heal.

"As someone who has represented victims of sexual assault, I know this has caused a lot of pain and trauma for Mr.

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