

# Interior official blasts resignation of parks advisory board

By DAN JOLING  
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A U.S. Interior Department official on Wednesday blasted the resignation of most members of a board that advises it on national parks, suggesting the move was politically motivated and their work was flawed.

Todd Willens, associate deputy secretary of the department, brought up investigations that uncovered sexual harassment at national parks such as Grand Canyon and Yellowstone and an internal investigative report of a guidebook written by former National Park Service leader Jonathan Jarvis.

"We welcome their resignations and would expect nothing less than quitting from members who found it convenient to turn a blind eye to women being sexually harassed at national parks and praise a man as 'inspiring' who had been blasted by the inspector general for ethics and man-

agement failures," Willens said.

Nine members of the 12-member National Park System Advisory Board, including chairman Tony Knowles, a Democratic former Alaska governor, resigned Monday in a letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, saying their requests to meet were ignored.

The Washington Post, which first reported the resignations, said a 10th member stepped down Wednesday.

It's the latest hit to committees that advise the Trump administration.

Half the expert members of a board that advises the Environmental Protection Agency on the integrity of its science were not reappointed last May. At the same time, the Interior Department said it launched a wide-ranging review of more than 200 boards and advisory committees, including some that had not met in years.

The congressionally authorized National Park System Advisory Board must meet



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais  
Former Alaska Gov. Tony Knowles, shown here at center in 2009, has resigned from a national parks advisory board.

twice per year by law but has not been called into session by the Interior Department since President Donald Trump took office.

"Our requests to engage have been ignored and the matters on which we wanted to brief the new department team are clearly not part of its agenda," Knowles wrote in the letter.

Willens said that was

"patently false" and that department officials were working to renew the board's charter, schedule a meeting and fill vacancies as recently as last week.

"Their hollow and dishonest political stunt should be a clear indicator of the intention of the group," he said.

Knowles, the board chairman, said no one at the department contacted him or other

board members this month about future meetings. The idea of a political statement by board members, made up of national experts in natural resources, financial management, geography and other fields, was disingenuous, he said.

Most of the board had worked together for seven years.

"We're all a bunch of wonks," Knowles said. "There's absolutely nothing political about any person on it. We have a lot of different backgrounds and were all brought together because we want to do something really important for the national park system of America and build it for the 21st century."

The board has collected comment from more than 100 experts, including Nobel Prize winners, to offer advice on challenges the system faces, including climate change, attracting more diverse visitors and employees, and protecting natural diversity of wildlife.

As for sexual harassment within the parks, Knowles said, "We had complete confidence that Jon Jarvis, a person of integrity and strong control of the park system, was taking care of it."

Jarvis is now executive director of the Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity at the University of California, Berkeley. He said by email he had no comment.

Knowles said he had no knowledge of a report on Jarvis by the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General. It investigated a guidebook that Jarvis wrote without consulting the department's ethics office. The book was published by a nonprofit group that operates stores and sells merchandise in national parks.

The report determined that Jarvis worked on the book outside office hours and directed royalties to the National Park Foundation, which raises money for the National Park Service.

## Measure 101 petitioners float new funding plan

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Two state lawmakers behind next week's special election say they've found a new way to pay for Medicaid.

State Reps. Julie Parrish, R-Tualatin/West Linn, and Cedric Hayden, R-Fall Creek, petitioned to get the state's existing Medicaid funding plan on the ballot as Measure 101.

About 1 million Oregonians are on Medicaid, known as the Oregon Health Plan. The program serves low-income people and other qualifying groups.

The election is Tuesday. A "no" vote could throw a wrench into the state's health care budget, but Parrish and Hayden believe they've found a way to plug the hole and continue to draw down federal matching funds that pay for most of the program.

But it's not yet clear whether their plan, unveiled Tuesday, will make up the difference because it has not been scored by nonpartisan legislative analysts.

The current version of the bill they've now proposed would expand what's referred to as the state's provider tax.

Health care providers pay a refundable assessment to the state, which in turn uses the money to collect matching funds from the federal government. Providers get the money back.

Most states use a provider tax to get matching federal funds to pay for their Medicaid programs.

Oregon lawmakers crafted a plan last year that included those types of taxes on hospitals, but also created taxes on managed care organizations and insur-

ers, and a nonrefundable tax on hospitals, which Parrish and Hayden object to.

Instead, the two lawmakers propose taxing a wider range of health care providers, not just hospitals and long-term care facilities.

In addition to taxing hospitals, Parrish and Hayden's new bill would also tax surgical centers and ambulance companies. Future versions could include even more health care businesses, such as pharmacies, Parrish says.

Parrish argues that taxing more providers could cover the rising costs of Medicaid. That's a growing concern as the federal government tapers its share of the Medicaid bill.

Although the feds initially picked up all of the tab for patients covered under the Medicaid expansion of income criteria under the Affordable Care Act, by 2020, the state will be responsible for 10 percent of the costs of the expansion population.

Parrish and Hayden's proposal would also use one-time revenues to temporarily continue a state program that holds certain insurance premiums down, and require the Oregon Health Authority to do monthly reconciliations to confirm that all recipients still reside in Oregon.

The pair have also previously suggested taxing large companies that self-insure, but detractors say that could be subject to a legal challenge.

The lawmakers' proposal comes as they approach the end of a wonky health care campaign where their critics — including the state's largest health care organizations and unions — have

argued Parrish and Hayden didn't have a viable back-up plan.

Hayden, a dentist who serves Oregon Health Plan patients, unsuccessfully floated a somewhat similar proposal in last year's legislative session. It included a tobacco tax, a tax on vaping, and assumed Medicaid caseloads would drop.

Janet Bauer, a policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, which supports Measure 101, says the long legislative session in 2019 would be a better time to assess the policies in the new proposal.

Legislators convene for short sessions in even-numbered years, and long sessions in odd-numbered years to develop the state's two-year budget.

Bauer said she could not comment on specifics of Parrish and Hayden's proposal without reading the actual bill, but that generally, it would be better to wait another year when legislators have more time to weigh the merits of another funding strategy.

"I think that it's rolling the dice to suggest that we should overturn a solution that we already have," Bauer said.

The Yes For Healthcare campaign, which is advocating to keep the current funding plan, dismissed the proposal.

"This is more of the same misleading tactics and should not be trusted," the campaign said in a statement in response to the proposal. "The only way to protect health care funding is Yes on Measure 101."

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

## Oregon joins challenge of net neutrality repeal

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

Oregon has joined 20 other states and the District of Columbia in launching a legal challenge to the Federal Communications Commission's decision in December to repeal a rule barring internet providers from blocking or charging more for access to one website over another.

The lawsuit, filed Tuesday in the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., asks the court to overturn the decision to repeal "net neutrality" and to find it unlawful. The suit alleges that the decision by the FCC was an abuse of discretion and that it violated the U.S. Constitution and the Communications Act of 1934. Furthermore, attorneys general of the states argue that the action conflicted with notice-and-comment rule-making requirements.

Other plaintiffs in the case are the attorneys general of New York, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi,

New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

The FCC voted 3-2 along party lines to scrap the rule approved by the FCC in 2015. The commission's two Democrats voted against it.

An investigation by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's Office found that commenters to the FCC on the proposed rule change illegally used the identities of Americans from around the country to give feedback on net neutrality. His office has identified at least 2 million fake comments.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum has said the repeal of would have "lasting negative impacts for our economy and almost every aspect of our lives" and would "incentivize Big Cable over other companies."

Rosenblum spearheaded a letter from 18 state attorneys general to the FCC in early December urging commissioners to delay a vote until investigators could determine whether fraud was committed in the FCC comment process.



Ellen Rosenblum

## Woman arrested after allegedly stabbing her partner in Seaside

The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — A woman was arrested for second-degree assault after allegedly stabbing her partner with a knife during an argument in Seaside Tuesday night.

Patience Cabansag was arrested. The victim was sent to the hospital for minor injuries.

The Seaside Police Department is looking for any witnesses who can provide more information about the stabbing police say occurred around

6 p.m. in the 300 block of N. Wahanna Road near Shore Terrace Estates.

Anyone with any information is asked to contact Detective Bill Barnes at the Seaside Police Department at 503-738-6311.

## Councilor Brownson holds meet and greet

The Daily Astorian

Astoria City Councilor Tom Brownson is

holding a "Meet Your Councilor" event at 9 a.m. Saturday at Three Cups Coffee, 279 W. Marine Drive. Residents are invited to discuss city issues.

## Coast Guard rescues three fishermen near Ecola State Park

The Daily Astorian

Three fishermen were rescued Wednesday afternoon after being stranded near an Ecola State Park beach.

The men were fishing in tide pools before a high

tide caused them to become stranded near Indian Beach around noon. A Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew hoisted the men and brought them to another section of the shore.

No injuries were reported.

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