

Kruse resigns over sexual misconduct allegations

The Roseburg Republican still denies claims

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — State Sen. Jeff Kruse submitted his resignation Thursday over allegations he persistently subjected women at the Oregon Capitol to unwelcome touching.

The resignation is effective March 15, so the Roseburg Republican will continue to receive a legislator's salary and \$142 in-session per diem. He has agreed not to come to the Capitol and will not be voting

on the Senate floor during the rest of the 35-day legislative session, which ends March 11, said Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland.

Despite a damning report by an independent investigator released Wednesday, Kruse, in a statement, continued to deny the allegations against him.

"For civil rights to be meaningful, there must be civil rights for all people, including the right to fundamental fairness for persons accused of harassment," Kruse wrote.

He said he regretted he would not have the opportunity to defend himself before the Senate Conduct Committee.

"However, today, I tender my resignation so my col-

leagues may focus on serving Oregonians without distraction and my constituents may receive the fullest representation they are due," he said.

The conduct committee, made up of two Democrats and two Republicans, was scheduled to hear the complaints against Kruse and review the independent investigation report on Feb. 22.

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said Kruse "made the right decision."

Courtney said he had been working with Senate Republican leaders throughout the week to secure Kruse's resignation.

"While Sen. Kruse's resignation ends a difficult chapter

for the Legislature, we cannot allow it to end this discussion," Courtney said. "We owe it to the courageous women who came forward to seize this moment."

The investigation was prompted by two public complaints by Sens. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis, and Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton. The senators sought Kruse's expulsion from the Senate after a confidential, informal complaint process in 2016 failed to change his behavior. The investigation showed that Kruse had subjected multiple female lawmakers, staff members and interns to unwanted touching and that he had not taken

requests to stop seriously.

Burdick said the accounts by multiple female lawmakers, staff members and interns in the independent investigation were "devastating."

"I believe the women who courageously came forward," Burdick said. "It was past time for Sen. Kruse to resign. We now have work to do to make our Capitol a harassment-free workplace, and that all individuals are respected."

Senate Republican Leader Jackie Winters of Salem thanked Kruse for his 22 years of service to Oregon.

"He has been a true advocate for his district and rural Oregon. As we move forward, we must work to provide a safe

work environment for all," she said in a statement.

Kruse said representing the residents in the counties of Curry and portions of Coos, Douglas, Josephine and Jackson had been the "greatest honor" of his life.

"I have been proud to serve alongside my colleagues in the Oregon House and Senate, and I am very proud of my accomplishments in health care and education," he said. "I look forward to returning to the wonderful community that has supported me for over two decades."

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



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

A bill that would increase compensation for livestock losses based on Oregon's wolf population has survived an initial legislative deadline.

Wolf compensation bill clears initial hurdle

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A proposal tying the amount of money available to ranchers for livestock losses to Oregon's wolf population has cleared its first hurdle.

Under House Bill 4106, Oregon lawmakers would be required to appropriate money to the state's wolf compensation fund based on the population of the species, to the extent practicable.

The bill will be scheduled for a work session during the next meeting of the House Agriculture Committee on Tuesday, allowing the proposal to survive an initial legislative deadline,

said state Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, the committee's chairman.

Several ranchers testified that it only makes sense to increase compensation funding as the number of wolves in Oregon continues rising. State wildlife regulators currently peg the wolf population at more than 100, though some ranchers consider this a low estimate.

In Wallowa County, which is home to eight confirmed wolf packs, it costs up to \$30,000 a year to have a range rider patrol for the predators, said Rod Childers, a rancher in the area.

"One range rider is not cutting it," he said. "There's no way he can respond to all those different packs."

Washington County rural reserve change dies quickly in state House

Bill would have reclassified 1,700 acres

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A proposal to reclassify 1,700 acres in Washington County from a rural reserve to an urban reserve was killed shortly out of the gate.

Under House Bill 4075, the land could have been included in the Portland metropolitan area's urban growth boundary instead of being shielded from development for 50 years.

After the bill's first public hearing on Thursday before the House Agriculture Committee, proponents and critics learned it would go no further.

The committee's chairman, state Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, said the bill was too "problematic" for a thorough vetting during the short legislative session.

"This bill will not be moving forward this session in this committee," Clem said.

Many of the arguments for and against HB 4075 were familiar in Oregon's ongoing land use debate.

Supporters claimed more development in burgeoning Washington County would fuel the state's economic engine of high-tech development, which shouldn't be sacrificed for the "sacred cow" of preserving farmland.

Detractors argued that urbanization should become more condensed before spreading out, saving not only farmland but the agricultural infrastructure — such as machinery and input suppliers — needed to sustain the industry.

However, the discussion over urban and rural reserves also has another dimension due to the a "grand bargain" struck by lawmakers four years ago.

The concept of reserves became part of Oregon's land use law in 2007, when the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1011 aiming to improve the metropolitan region's long-term growth planning.

In 2012, the state's Land Conservation and Development Commission approved the rural and urban reserve designation developed by Portland's Metro regional government and the counties of Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah.

Two years later, though, the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled



Metro

A key lawmaker has killed off a proposal to eventually allow urbanization of 1,700 acres in Washington County that are currently in a rural reserve.

that the commission had made several errors in its approval, which threatened to greatly prolong the reserve designation process.

That court decision prompted state lawmakers in 2014 to pass a compromise bill establishing urban and rural reserves, effectively bypassing the bureaucratic process for such designations.

Opponents of the HB 4075 claim that "a deal is a deal," but if lawmakers go down the road of altering the 1,700 acres in Washington County, it will be difficult to reject future adjustment requests.

"This break of a settlement jeopardizes the reserves," said Mary Kyle McCurdy, deputy

director of the 1000 Friends of Oregon conservation group.

Steve Callaway, mayor of Hillsboro, acknowledged his city signed onto the "grand bargain" in 2014, but said it didn't expect so much land to be taken off the market over the next four years.

Hillsboro no longer has enough acres in urban reserves to adequately plan for the future, he said.

Jon Chandler, CEO of the Oregon Home Builders Association, said that "planning theory" in this case has run up against reality, which justifies an adjustment.

"Things change and these assumptions can't be sacrosanct," he said.

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