

# Brown plans to address property tax system

## Governor will work with lawmakers

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown says she plans to work with state lawmakers in 2019 to craft a ballot referral to reform the state's property tax system.

Brown made the comment at the Portland City Club's Friday Forum at the Sentinel Hotel in downtown Friday in answer to a question from former Portland Commissioner Steve Novick.

"The taxes we pay are based largely on what a house was worth in 1995 rather than what it's worth today," Novick said. "That means the people in recently gentrified areas, like

inner east Portland, are paying low property taxes, whereas people in ungentrified areas, like far east Portland, are paying high property taxes." Are you planning to work with Sen. (Mark) Hass in 2019 to craft a measure to send to the voters to address this inequity?"

Brown responded that while voters need some education on how the property tax system works, she "would love to have the ongoing property tax conversation in the state again."

State Sen. Hass, D-Beaverton, chairman of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee, proposed addressing the property tax system in bills filed in 2015 and 2017. He said he is uncertain whether he'll propose a third iteration of the legislation in 2019.

To date, Brown has placed other priorities over property tax reform and other problem-



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune  
**Gov. Kate Brown answers questions at the Portland City Club's Friday Forum at the Sentinel Hotel.**

atic areas in the state tax code, Hass said.

She has called a special session for Monday to expand a business tax break, after she received heat for signing a bill earlier this year that denied Oregon businesses a 20-per-

cent tax break written into federal tax reform.

Hass said he could think of at least three other tax code problems that are more crucial to fix, including property tax reform.

Some of his tax reform pro-

posals have "always been just beyond arm's reach because more pressing needs come up," he said.

"I wish the governor was calling a special session to address these other tax issues because they're a much bigger problem."

The state property tax system, for instance, is in a state of collapse, Hass said.

"When you have someone who pays twice what their neighbor pays for the same house and that person says, 'This isn't fair. I'm not paying it.' It's something that happens in third-world countries, but I'd like to think it's not something that happens in Oregon."

Voters must ultimately vote to change the property tax code, as it was written into the Oregon Constitution.

Measure 50, approved in 1997, enacted a permanent operating rate limit for all

existing tax districts.

The rate was calculated largely by combining existing local tax levies. The tax rates cannot be changed by any action of the tax district and have remained stagnant since 1997, despite a burgeoning state economy in the past couple of years.

The complexity of the state's tax system is one of the challenges to passing a voter referral to reform it, lending credence to the governor's assertion that voters need more education before taking a vote.

One option is to propose a referral that simply asks voters whether they want an equitable tax system, Hass said. If voters affirm that, then the state courts and the Legislature could pass policies to reform it.

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

## Search called off for missing fisherman

Associated Press and  
Chinook Observer

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — The U.S. Coast Guard on Sunday called off the search for a man missing after his 43-foot fishing vessel sank in Willapa Bay.

Responders searched through the night after the man's wife reported him overdue on Saturday. They found an oil sheen and eventually the boat, but there was no sign of him.

The state Department of

Ecology said Sunday divers were planning to try to block the vessel's vents to keep oil from leaking out and to put a tracker on the wreck, because it's been pushed around by the tide.

The Coast Guard said the vessel reportedly could have been carrying up to 500 gallons of diesel fuel.

Kevin Soule, the skipper of the Kelli J, is believed to have been pulling crab pots at the time of the accident.

Port of Peninsula Manager Jay Personius confirmed Sun-

day afternoon that Soule was at the helm Saturday and is thought to have been the only person on board.

Sunday afternoon, the Kelli J was found submerged in the waters between Oysterville Sea Farms and Bay Center, according to the port and other sources. Efforts to recover the vessel are complicated by swift currents in the area. Willapa Bay largely empties and refills each tide cycle, generating intense water velocities.

His wife reported Soule overdue after he didn't return

to port by noon Saturday, according to the Coast Guard.

Kevin Soule is married to Heather Unruh Soule, manager of Long Beach KeyBank. The couple have two daughters, ages 10 and 6. The Soules are a well-known multigenerational fishing family on the bay.

The Kelli J, a fiberglass-hulled vessel built in 1977, is registered to Shoalwater Seafoods LLC of Long Beach, which is owned by Soule, according to public records.

## Cannon Beach city attorney steps down

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Cannon Beach City Attorney Tammy Herdener has announced her resignation, citing her desire for a career change and to spend more time with family.

Herdener, who has worked for the city since 2007, will be leaving this July to invest more time as a professor at American Public University, a job she has held with the online institution since 2003.

Living in Portland, Herdener also said balancing commutes to Cannon Beach with family time was getting more difficult. "This is a part of a larger career change I've wanted to do," Herdener said. "I want to focus more on my students

and my family."

During her time in Cannon Beach, Herdener oversaw transitions between three city managers, helped navigate local marijuana ordinance changes after legalization and played an integral role in the purchase of the 800-acre Ecola Creek Forest Reserve.

Herdener said she is grateful for her time in Cannon Beach, and looks fondly upon her memories with numerous city councilors and staff.

"This job has been interesting and challenging. I'm leaving only on the most positive of terms and feelings," she said.

The city has posted the job opening and hopes to hire a new attorney by the end of June.

## 1 dead, 1 injured in cougar attack in Washington

Associated Press

NORTH BEND, Wash. — One man was killed and another seriously injured when they encountered a cougar Saturday while mountain biking in Washington state, officials said.

Authorities said the two men were on a morning bike ride in the foothills near North Bend when the attack occurred. The town is about 30 miles east of Seattle.

The mountain lion ran into the woods and officers with

the Washington Department of Fish and Game later tracked it down and shot and killed it, said Capt. Alan Myers of the state's Fish & Wildlife Police.

The 31-year-old survivor was taken to a hospital in Seattle. He was initially listed in serious condition in the emergency room but was alert and talking; his condition was later upgraded to satisfactory, The Seattle Times reported.

A search and rescue team was dispatched to recover the body of the dead man.

KIRO-TV reported that

the injured man called 911 shortly before 11 a.m. and shouted, "Can you hear me? Help!" and then the call hung up.

Authorities found the cougar standing over the body of the dead biker, the station reported.

It wasn't immediately clear if the two victims were biking together or separately.

In the last 100 years in North America, roughly 25 fatalities and 95 nonfatal cougar attacks have been reported, the Washington

Department of Fish & Wildlife said, but there was only one other fatal attack in the state. However, more attacks have been reported in the western United States and Canada over the past 20 years than in the previous 80 years.

## Eagle Creek Fire perpetrator fined \$36.6 million for devastating blaze

By **AMELIA TEMPLETON**  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The judge in the Eagle Creek Fire case has ordered the 15-year-old boy who admitted starting the blaze to pay \$36.6 million in restitution.

A lawyer for the Vancouver, Washington, teen had argued that amount was unconstitutional given the teen's age and described the \$36 million requested by prosecutors as "absurd."

Judge John Olson disagreed.

"In short, I'm satisfied that the restitution ordered in this case bears a sufficient relationship to the gravity of the offenses for which the youth was adjudicated," Olson wrote in a decision released this morning. "The juvenile restitution framework is rationally related to the juvenile delinquency goals of 'personal responsibility, accountability and reformation within the context of public safety.' Given the statutory safety valves, I am satisfied that the restitution scheme does not 'shock the moral sense of reasonable people.'"

Olson ordered the boy, whose name has not been made public, to repay nine parties a total of \$36.6 million. The Oregon Department of Transportation and the U.S. Forest Service are the largest payees at \$12.5 million and \$21.1 million.

The judge asked the Hood River Juvenile Department to set up a payment plan. Olson did note in his ruling that the boy can ask the courts to declare his debt repaid after 10 years if he's kept up his payments and done everything the court has demanded of him

during that period. The boy, who pleaded guilty, has also been sentenced to five years of probation and 1,900 hours of community service.

The Eagle Creek Fire began with a firecracker thrown into a canyon. It burned nearly 47,000 acres in the Columbia River Gorge.



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