

# Oregon Dems blast Supreme Court nominee

By GILLIAN FLACCUS  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown joined Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and some Democratic members of Oregon's congressional delegation on Thursday to condemn U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and call for an independent investigation into decades-old allegations of sexual assault against him.

At a rally and news conference at a Planned Parenthood office in Portland, speakers — including U.S. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici and Earl Blumenauer — told attendees that Kavanaugh's successful nomination could also threaten a woman's right to an abortion even in a liberal state like Oregon.



Sen. Jeff Merkley speaks at the rally. Backing him are, from right, Gov. Kate Brown, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Sen. Ron Wyden.

Kavanaugh has been accused by Christine Blasey Ford, a California college professor, of sexually assaulting Ford at a party in the 1980s in a Maryland suburb of

Washington.

Kavanaugh has denied the allegations.

The press conference came at the same time that a Ford attorney told the Judiciary Com-



People hold signs of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh at the rally.

mittee that her client would testify next week to the Senate about her accusation against Kavanaugh if agreement can be reached to "terms that are fair and which ensure her safety."

The message resurrected the possibility that the panel would hold a dramatic hearing at which both Ford and Kavanaugh could give their versions of what happened at the

party when they were both high schoolers.

The allegation has shaken Kavanaugh's prospects for winning Senate confirmation to be a justice, which until Ford's emergence last week had seemed all but certain.

Wyden said the hearing was not enough and called for a formal investigation into Ford's allegations.

"There are credible and serious allegations against Brett Kavanaugh and there needs to be a credible and serious process, rather than something where you just ram this thing through and then say, 'Gee, I guess we're too busy, for example, to even listen to witnesses!'" he said.

Both senators said they would not vote for Kavanaugh.

# Voter approval for tolls moves closer to the 2020 election ballot

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

A voter initiative that would amend the state Constitution to require in certain circumstances voter approval to place tolls on existing freeways is moving closer toward the 2020 ballot.

The Oregon Department of Justice released the draft ballot title for Initiative Petition 10 on Monday, Sept. 17. The draft opens up a public comment period before the ballot title is finalized.

Dubbed "Tolls Need Voter Approval," the initiative would require a vote of the people to toll existing freeways unless the proceeds paid only for increasing vehicle capacity. Voter approval would be required both statewide and in the county where the toll would be imposed.

Under the Constitution, revenue from transportation tolls may be used for a variety of purposes, including construction, reconstruction, repair, maintenance, operation and use of public highways" and other roads.

Additionally, officials with the Oregon Department of Transportation have asked the DOJ for advice on whether the Constitution allows the proceeds to be used to pay for improving access to public transportation and carpool incentives. The idea is that both strategies remove vehicles off the freeways and



Pamplin Media Group

Sponsors of the "Tolls Need Voter Approval" initiative may soon be able to gather signatures to land the proposal on the 2020 ballot.

decrease traffic.

Gladstone Planning Commissioner Les Poole and state Reps. Mike Nearman, R-Independence, and Julie Parish, R-West Linn, filed the initiative in response to a proposal to toll sections of Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 in Portland to raise money for highway improvements.

"Logically, a toll would sunset once the project is paid for," Poole said. "Tolling is a way of financing a project in lieu of bonding the entire project. Together in aggregate, all of tolling money should have to go to that specific project. They (state transportation commissioners) want to charge us just to use the roads."

The Oregon Transportation Commission voted unanimously Aug. 16 to seek

approval from the Federal Highway Administration to toll the Abernethy Bridge on I-205 and all lanes of I-5 between Northeast Going Street/Alberta Street and Southwest Multnomah Boulevard. Meanwhile, commissioners have instructed the ODOT to conduct a feasibility study of tolling all seven interstates in Portland to form a "seamless loop" around the city.

Gov. Kate Brown has expressed support for that strategy.

However, poll results suggest the vast majority of Oregonians are more skeptical of tolling.

A DHM Research poll commissioned by ODOT in December found only 22.5 percent of residents in Multnomah, Washington, Clacka-

mas and Clark counties were willing to pay a toll weekly or more frequently.

About 31 percent agreed ODOT should explore multiple options for encouraging motorists to alter their transportation choices, including tolling.

Even if the initiative passes, the transportation commission could still impose tolls without voter approval. No vote is required if the tolls are used to pay for "new net capacity."

The intent is that the proceeds would go toward projects on the road or bridge where the toll applies, Poole said. That is something the survey showed more residents support.

"New net capacity" is defined as "expansion of transportation infrastructure which did not exist prior to Jan. 1, 2018, and which has not been converted from a previous form of transportation infrastructure" already built and/or operated with public moneys.

The state Elections Division will accept written comments on the draft ballot title until 5 p.m. Oct. 1. The comments will be delivered to the DOJ for consideration before certification of the ballot title.

Comments may be emailed to [irrlstnotifier.sos@oregon.gov](mailto:irrlstnotifier.sos@oregon.gov), faxed to 503-373-7414 or mailed to Elections Division, 255 Capitol St. N.E., Suite 501, Salem, Oregon 97301.



AP Photo/Don Ryan

A marijuana plant is shown in Oregon.

# Patients react to new limits on Oregon medical marijuana

By NOELLE CROMBIE  
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — In August, a state analyst spotted dozens of suspicious transactions when he crunched cannabis sales data: a small number of medical marijuana cardholders bought unusually large quantities of marijuana flowers on consecutive days.

Oregon regulators suspected medical marijuana patients and caregivers were exploiting the system by buying cannabis to sell on the illicit market.

The response was swift. The Oregon Liquor Control Commission, under pressure from federal officials to tackle the robust black market for marijuana, quickly issued a temporary rule that dramatically reduced the amount that medical marijuana cardholders could buy in a day.

The limit dropped from a pound and a half of marijuana to 1 ounce — the same quantity recreational cannabis consumers are allowed to buy.

"What we saw was abuse, clear abuse of the standards," Steve Marks, executive director of the Liquor Control Commission, said Wednesday.

Over 19 days in August, for instance, one medical marijuana cardholder bought nearly 13 pounds of cannabis. Another bought 7 pounds over 10 days that month.

Officials said the questionable transactions came from a small percentage of cardholders and that the typical purchase for most cardholders was 4 grams or less.

Marks said marijuana program overseers worried that the state's low marijuana prices enticed some cardholders to stock up and "take it to Iowa or wherever and sell for a profit."

"We saw that happening," he said, adding it was "a little bit of a Ponzi scheme."

Oregon has been in the crosshairs of U.S. Justice Department leaders for not doing enough to crack down on the black market. U.S. Attorney Billy Williams has repeatedly expressed frustration with the state's failure to contain production and he's chided top officials for not devoting enough resources to oversight and enforcement.

On Wednesday, patients and advocates for the medical marijuana program blasted the new limits at a contentious meeting of the state's rules advisory committee.

Advocates said medical marijuana patients sometimes need large quantities of the drug to make products they rely on to treat their conditions and they accused the state of meddling with medicine.

# US agrees to improve worker safety at Hanford

By PHUONG LE  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — The U.S. government will test and implement a new system to capture and destroy dangerous vapors released at the nation's most polluted nuclear weapons production site as part of a settlement agreement reached Wednesday.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson told reporters that the agreement represents a major win for hundreds of workers who have been getting sick for years while cleaning up the nation's nuclear waste at the Hanford

Nuclear Reservation in eastern Washington.

"Those workers deserve to be protected," Ferguson said.

He added that the U.S. Department of Energy did not take the issue seriously and resisted putting protections in place.

The Energy Department will for the first time test a new technology that Ferguson

called "game-changing" that would protect workers from the vapor exposures.

Under the agreement, the agency will pay \$925,000 in fees and costs to the state and Hanford Challenge, a watchdog group that has for decades been warning about worker safety. The agency will also install a new vapor monitoring and alarm system and maintain

safety measures that are currently in place, including supplying air and respirators.

The Department of Energy said in an emailed statement that the agreement "acknowledges the extensive actions" that the agency, and its contractor, Washington River Protection Solutions LLC, have taken to protect workers from potential exposure to chemical vapors.

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