

# Oregon Legislature kicks off work to curb campaign spending

By LAUREN DAKE  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Gov. Kate Brown, who was part of the state's most expensive governor's race ever last year, told lawmakers on Wednesday that it's time to curb the amount of political money spent in Oregon.

A newly-created campaign finance committee in the state Senate is tasked with reining in Oregon's campaign finance laws, an area that is akin — as the governor likes to say — to the “wild, Wild West.”

“I want to see change that makes elections more competitive and that reduces barriers to participating for candidates and frankly for donors as well,” Brown told the Senate Committee on Campaign Finance.

The governor said she

raised three times more than her three Democratic predecessors in her last race. And she urged lawmakers to increase transparency when it comes to reporting contributions and expenditures.

Campaign spending and donations should be posted quickly for the public to see, she said. Currently, there is often a 30-day window before transactions become public.

The governor also said it's time for Oregon to tackle what's known as “dark money,” essentially donations made to nonprofits that do political work but aren't limited in how much they can collect and aren't required to disclose their supporters.

“As long as dollars flow unfettered in Oregon, the very least we can do is ensure that everyone can follow the



Bradley W. Parks/Oregon Public Broadcasting  
Gov. Kate Brown speaks to reporters in her ceremonial office at the Capitol in Salem in January.

money in politics,” Brown said.

Brown, who benefited tremendously from union support in the last election cycle, also told lawmakers that it's time to limit how much candidates can accept.

Oregon is only one of a

handful of states that doesn't have any cap on how much money can be given to candidates.

Brown, who can't run for re-election after this four-year term ends, has in the past pushed for a \$2,600 limit for individual donors and

\$5,000 for political action committees.

Voters would need to amend the state's constitution to move forward with changing the campaign contribution rules. Oregon voters have been reticent to amend the free-speech clause of the constitution.

The governor, a lawyer, said previously she thinks there is a route to amend the provision in the constitution dealing with elections.

“Quite simply, the fact that in Oregon, we cannot even discuss what limits can or should look like because of the way our constitution has been interpreted is both mind-boggling and frankly deeply disappointing to me,” Brown said.

The governor said she would like to see something on the ballot in the 2020 elec-

tion. Independent Party Candidate Patrick Starnes also attended the hearing.

In a surprise move toward the end of the 2018 governor's race, Starnes dropped out and endorsed Brown. He said he was convinced Brown was the candidate most willing to address campaign finance reform and that his decision was influenced by Republican candidate Knute Buehler's decision to accept \$2.5 million from Nike co-founder Phil Knight.

State Sen. Tim Knopp, a Republican from Bend, and a member of the campaign finance committee, said the state is quickly moving toward being a constitutional republic where very few people dictate who gets elected.

“I think that should be disturbing for every American, every Oregonian,” he said.

## Seaside woman arraigned on 145 theft-related charges

By BRENNNA VISSER  
The Daily Astorian

A Seaside woman was arraigned on Wednesday on 145 charges related to stealing people's identities.

Desirai Skye Schehl, 27, was charged with multiple felony counts of identity theft and mail theft.

Schehl was also charged with one count of racketeering, as well as three counts of forgery, one count of burglary and one count of theft. The crimes were allegedly carried out from September 2017 to June and involved more than 100 people and businesses, according to court documents.

Schehl was indicted on similar charges stemming from an incident last year. On

Wednesday, she pleaded no contest to one felony count of identity theft and one felony count of computer crime.

Judge Paula Brownhill found Schehl guilty on both counts, but postponed sentencing until a resolution is reached on the new charges.

Schehl decided to waive her right to a grand jury investigation. In exchange, the state is offering to recommend no more than 10 years in prison.

“Almost every count is a repeat property offense. My client's exposure would be her natural life in prison,” said James von Boeckmann, Schehl's defense attorney.

Schehl is being held on \$100,000 bail. Her next court appearance is scheduled for March.



Desirai Skye Schehl

## Jackson County asks state to deny pipeline permit

Associated Press

MEDFORD — Jackson County commissioners are asking the state to block a proposed natural gas pipeline that would ferry gas over 229 miles of southern Oregon to an export terminal near Coos Bay.

The Oregon Department of State Lands is considering whether to grant the project a key permit and is taking public comment until Feb. 3. There is broad opposition to the pipeline in Klamath, Jackson, Douglas and Coos counties, The Mail Tribune reported Wednesday.

Pembina Pipeline Corp., a Canadian company, wants to use the pipeline to export North American natural gas to Asian markets. But county commissioners have long been opposed to the proj-

ect because of the possibility that eminent domain could be used against property owners unwilling to have the pipeline cross their land.

“All indications are that the benefits to Jackson County will be extremely minimal, while the costs to our wetlands and water bodies is high,” the letter says.

Pembina says the project would create 1,400 jobs during the pipeline's construction and 1,000 jobs while the export terminal is being built. More than 200 people would have permanent jobs once construction is done, mainly at the export facility, it says.

The project would generate \$60 million annually in tax revenue for the southern Oregon counties, according to Pembina.

In their letter, Jackson County officials said there

is no guarantee that Pembina would cover the costs of restoration if the pipeline is damaged or fails.

They point to the example of PG&E. The power utility announced it will go through Chapter 11 bankruptcy after its equipment was implicated in 2017 and 2018 wildfires that burned 24,600 structures and killed more than 100 people in California.

The letter says Pembina wants to use water from reservoirs, a lake and an irrigation canal in Jackson County to fill the pipeline and test its strength.

“These water sources are important for irrigation, fire suppression and livestock watering,” the letter says. “Considering the drought conditions of the last several years, and extreme fire conflagrations in Oregon and this region of the country, removing water from

these sources is detrimental to our ranching community and a life-safety issue when reducing water supply available for wildland fire suppression.”

The pipeline would cross 87 waterways and wetlands in the county, including the Rogue River, and cross beneath the Rogue River 2 miles north of Shady Cove.

County officials say in the letter the crossing is too close to homeowners, who would be subjected to construction and drilling noise and other effects. They also worry about the leakage of drilling fluid into the river.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is reviewing the project at the national level. The commission denied a previous iteration of the project in 2016, saying potential harms outweighed potential benefits.

## Knappa coach accused of having sex with student

The Daily Astorian

Nathaniel Stephen Dale Truax, an assistant coach at Knappa High School, was arraigned Wednesday on one count of rape in the third degree and one count of sodomy in the third

degree.

Truax, 21, allegedly had sex with a student who is a minor.

Knappa School District Superintendent Paulette Johnson said Truax has been suspended as a coach while the incident is being investi-

gated by the school district.

Truax, a Knappa graduate, was released on the conditions that he make no contact with the victim or visit the high school.

Truax's next court appearance is scheduled for late February.

## County unemployment inches up in December

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate continued to inch upward, reaching 4.3 percent in December, according to state figures.

The county's rate, slightly higher than the statewide — 4.1 percent — and national — 3.9 percent — rates, was tied with Wasco County for the ninth-lowest among 36 counties.

The state tracks seasonally adjusted unemployment rates, comparing expected changes with reality.

Clatsop County lost 270 jobs in December, 40 fewer than expected. The county's nonfarm payroll employment was at 18,820, a gain of 40 from one year prior.

In December, the private sector lost 250 jobs, while government employment dipped by 20. Leisure and hospitality shed 170 jobs; construction 40; local gov-

ernment 40; and food manufacturing 30. Education and health services added 40 jobs.

Over the past year, retail trade has added 220 positions, and leisure and hospitality 200. Professional and business services has cut 150; construction 80; and local education 80.

Columbia County had a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 5 percent, and Tillamook County was at 4.6 percent.

## Elk illegally killed and left to rot on Oregon Coast

Associated Press

SALEM — Officials say four elk were illegally killed and left to waste in Lincoln and Tillamook counties in early January.

The Statesman Journal reported that Oregon State Police are asking for

help in identifying those responsible.

Officials say on Jan. 8, a five-point bull elk was found dead and wasted in Toledo, just inland from Newport.

Police say an investigation revealed the elk had

been shot by a high-powered rifle.

Police say four days later three cow elk were found shot and killed with a high-caliber rifle and were left to waste in a clearcut several miles from Highway 6 on Fox Creek Road.

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