

Bill: Mitchell said she sees a strong likelihood of the bill passing

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Mitchell hadn't planned on helping to craft such legislation, but said she saw the financial circumstance faced by the Coast Guard. She has a professional background in social services, including administering unemployment insurance for Utah.

"I just saw an opportunity where I said, 'I know exactly what's going on, and I have an idea of how we can fix this and get people paid,'" the Astoria Democrat said.

Mitchell's legislation — Senate Bill 722, sponsored with Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem — would provide a program similar to a no-interest loan, funded through the state Employment Department, to pay unemployment benefits to active-duty Coast Guard. The state would also set up a mechanism to recoup the payments to the Coast Guard once they get paychecks from the federal government.

During the 35-day partial shutdown, the state took more than 3,300 unemployment claims by federal employees, compared to 1,000 over the same time period a year ago.

"We had minimal claims filed by the Coast Guard during the recent shutdown," said Vanessa Krueger, a spokeswoman for the Employment Department. "That may be because of communications at the federal and state level pointing out that under the applicable federal government programs, people who were required to work full time, as most Coast Guard service members were, were not eligible for unemployment benefits."

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'I JUST SAW AN OPPORTUNITY WHERE I SAID, 'I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON, AND I HAVE AN IDEA OF HOW WE CAN FIX THIS.'

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell

Courtney in the Senate and the office of Gov. Kate Brown, Mitchell said she sees a strong likelihood of the bill passing. Her efforts come after Democrats in Oregon's congressional delegation — U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and U.S. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, Earl Blumenauer, Kurt Schrader and Peter DeFazio — wrote a letter asking the U.S. Department of Labor to make clear that essential government workers are eligible for state-administered unemployment insurance.

"Each day the federal government requires 'excepted' employees to perform work without pay is untenable and the (Department of Labor) has the authority to help ease that hardship by allowing these 'excepted' federal employees the ability to apply for unemployment insurance," the Democrats wrote.

Mitchell is also a chief sponsor of bills to buy prescription drugs wholesale from Canada, make Oregon a part of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact for the presidential election and a resolution to designate May 22 as Oregon Kind is Better Day to promote civility.

Bond: Taxpayers will also see a lower bill

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With the premium, along with a \$4 million matching state grant secured upon passage of the bond, Warrenton now has a cushion to ensure all projects can be completed, said Mike Moha, the business manager in Warrenton.

Taxpayers will also see a lower bill after both Astoria and Warrenton's bonds received high ratings from investors confident in the school districts' financial wherewithal.

Astoria estimates the property tax burden will decrease from \$2.83 to \$2.75 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in the first year of payments. Warrenton expects the average cost of its bond to taxpayers to decrease from an estimated \$2.68 to \$2.51 over the life of the bond, Moha said.

"At the time, the market for bonds was really good," Moha said of the bond sales this winter. "The stock market was kind of jittery at the time, but that's good for



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Yes For Astoria Kids, a political action committee created to support the school district's \$70 million bond, put out signs, posters, social media posts and videos for the bond campaign in November.

bond sales." Clatsop County will sell nearly \$20 million worth of bonds later this month to

fund the remodel of the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton into a new county jail.

Monica Steele, the interim county manager, said the bonds have already received a favorable rating.

Development: 'Please don't ruin your best asset'

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'THE (HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION) AND (THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE) GET TO GUIDE THEM AESTHETICALLY, BUT THE POINT IS THEY GET TO BUILD AUTOMATICALLY.'

Sarah Jane Bardy | one of the petition's authors, who serves on the city's Design Review Committee

"The (Historic Landmarks Commission) and (the Design Review Committee) get to guide them aesthetically, but the point is they get to build automatically," Bardy said.

Yet, she added, "We know we have issues with our sewage treatment ... we know we have parking issues. We know that we have only two-lane roads running into town. It just doesn't make sense to put priority on these hotels that are going to have however many dozens to hundreds of rooms when the infrastructure can't handle our population of 9,000 people or so."

Public Works Director Jeff Harrington said sewage capacity isn't a problem for the city yet. Right now, the city is looking into instances of higher concentrations in the system, a different challenge than capacity. Harrington isn't sure how much any one

development project would impact the sewage system overall.

"We don't know enough to distinctly say," he said. "But everything is old, we know that for sure."

Questions about how to develop the waterfront are at the forefront of community and city discussions.

At the same time city boards were evaluating the Fairfield Inn, another hotelier indicated an interest in developing a large hotel on Youngs Bay. Meanwhile, the Planning Commission has held lengthy work sessions to discuss guidelines for the Urban Core, the final section of the Riverfront Vision Plan.

The Planning Commission recently approved a new waterfront hotel project at a former seafood processing plant from the developers behind Buoy Beer and the Adrift Hotel.

City leaders — most notably Jones, after he voted in favor of allowing the Fairfield Inn's developers to proceed and a few weeks before he took over as mayor — have urged people to push for changes to the city's code if they are concerned about hotels on the waterfront.

When Jones held his first "Meet the Mayor" event in the Astoria Library last week, former Planning Commissioner Jan Mitch-

ell, a member of Friends of the Astoria Waterfront who is married to City Councilor Roger Rocka, had a question. Often, the same people attend City Council meetings, Mitchell noted. What is the best way for these familiar faces to show that they represent more people than just themselves?

Jones suggested they bring a petition.

Many of the signers of the petition on waterfront development said they live in Astoria, but the petition has received support from people outside of the city.

"We love the waterfront and visit often," wrote one man from Eugene. "Please don't ruin your best asset."

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