

# People could lose out on food stamp benefits

An estimated 60,000 in Oregon

The Oregonian

About 3.1 million people would lose food stamp benefits under the Trump administration's proposal to tighten automatic eligibility requirements for the food stamp program.

Nationwide, about 9% of households that receive benefits are expected to be cut off. If Oregon were to be proportionally affected, nearly 60,000 Oregonians could lose food stamps.

Jennifer Greutz, spokeswoman for the Oregon Department of Human Services, said the agency is still analyzing how many Oregon residents they expect will be affected. Roughly 350,000 Oregon households qualify for monthly food assistance.

The Agriculture Department said Tuesday that the rule would close a loophole that enables people receiving only minimal benefits from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to be eligible automatically for food stamps without undergoing further checks on their income or assets.

"For too long, this loophole has been used to effectively bypass important eligibility guidelines. Too often, states have misused this flexibility without restraint," Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said in a statement.

The proposed rule is the latest in the Trump administration's efforts to cut back

on the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, the official name of the food stamp program. It also has proposed to tighten work requirements for those who receive federal food assistance.

USDA estimates that 1.7 million households — 3.1 million people — "will not otherwise meet SNAP's income and asset eligibility prerequisites under the proposed rule." That would result in a net savings of about \$9.4 billion over five years.

An unpublished version of the proposed rule acknowledges the impact, saying it "may also negatively impact food security and reduce the savings rates among those individuals who do not meet the income and resource eligibility requirements for SNAP or the substantial and ongoing requirements for expanded categorical eligibility."

Democrats in Congress were quick to condemn the proposal.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it was "the administration's latest act of staggering callousness" while Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said he would "fight to make sure these cuts never become a reality."

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said the administration was trying anew to circumvent Congress and that the effect would be to "take food away from families, prevent children from getting school meals, and make it harder for states to administer food assistance."



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

A cargo ship passes under the Astoria Bridge.

# Other ports object to Astoria fee

Lawsuit is possible

By MALLORY GRUBEN  
The Daily News

LONGVIEW, Wash. — A new \$300 fee the Port of Astoria is charging cargo vessels traveling to or through the Port has angered steamship operators and other Columbia River ports, who claim it undercuts longtime collaboration, might be illegal and discourages cargo vessels from doing business here.

The Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association said it is prepared to sue the Port because it believes the fee conflicts with the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, said Kate Mickelson, the group's executive director.

And Port of Longview commissioners Wednesday unanimously voted to oppose the fee, stating in a letter to the Port of Astoria that the fee is "in direct conflict with the spirit of collaboration that built (the Columbia River) navigation channel."

The letter also states that the Port of Longview intends to "join efforts with our partners and member associations ... to deem this fee unlawful."

The letter notes that both state and federal governments have invested tens of millions of dollars to deepen and maintain the shipping channel and to attract cargo to the lower river.

"Now that upriver ports are realizing the benefits of their combined efforts, Astoria is seeking to capitalize on the financial investments of partner ports and impose unnecessary and cumbersome fees

on our customers."

Port of Astoria commissioners unanimously approved the fee in March. It charges any trade vessel that is 250-feet or longer a \$300 harbor use fee upon arriving in the port's jurisdiction, whether it docks in Astoria or continues upriver. It does not apply to government ships, tugs or pleasure craft. Revenue from the fee will fund operation and maintenance for Pier 1, a wharf that provides an emergency berth to distressed vessels.

"This modest fee is necessary to defray costs associated with the Port's ongoing maintenance of Pier 1, which provides the only available critical emergency berth for distressed vessels at the mouth of the Columbia River," Port of Astoria interim executive director Will Isom wrote in a letter to steamship agents.

Port of Longview spokeswoman Ashley Helenberg said 1,483 cargo vessels called on the Columbia River in 2018. Of those, 267 docked at the Port of Longview.

In 2017, the Columbia and Lower Willamette river channel was used to transport 47.5 million tons of cargo valued at \$16 billion, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Port officials fear the new fee will discourage shippers from doing business with Longview and other Columbia River ports.

"The ports along the Columbia River compete for the cargo with ports in California and Gulf ports. We work very hard to maintain strong infrastructure to attract cargo, and arbitrary fees are counterproductive to the efforts of maintaining our competi-

tiveness for cargo," Helenberg said.

Even though the fee is small, any amount of extra money can "be the turning point for a shipper to pick a different port," said Port of Longview Chief Executive Officer Norm Krehbiel. "It's a disincentive for shippers to use the Columbia River. ... and that's definitely not something we want to see."

Mickelson said the fee could set a precedent for other ports to follow suit. If that happens, "the fee assessments will ripple into an economic calamity to shipping in our system and impair the lifeblood of our regional economy. ... This additional assessment may not only be a hindrance to attracting new business to our region, but has the potential to lose existing business that the Port of Astoria and their port partners have worked so diligently to attain," she said.

The fee also makes steamship operators pay for an emergency berth service they never asked for and might not use, Helenberg said.

"As far as we know, there is no requirement, no mandate, no request of the Coast Guard (to do this)," she said.

She added that the Coast Guard can use any dock, wharf or pier in the Columbia River for distressed vessels. "The Port of Longview takes distressed vessels all the time here," Helenberg said.

"Port of Kalama is very concerned, and we continue to investigate this matter," Newman said.

Mickelson said her organization was created to support commercial activity on the river, and, "We are confident when we say that the river community does not support the Port (of Astoria's) action."

And vessels here are only charged for emergency docking when they actually use that as a service, said Port of Longview Commission President Doug Averett.

Astoria's fee is like "having a driveway that you let cars use if a tree falls in the road ... but in the meantime charging \$50 to every car that passes by so you can maintain that driveway," Averett said.

"We will do everything we can to fight this fee," Averett told The Daily News after signing the opposition letter. "I'm happy we are being proactive on this point."

Longview port officials shared the letter with the ports of Kalama and Vancouver, Helenberg said, though she hasn't heard back on whether those ports will join Longview in taking a stance on the fee.

Liz Newman, spokeswoman for the Port of Kalama, said the commission there discussed the new fee at its July 10 meeting. However, commissioners did not take action on the matter.

"Port of Kalama is very concerned, and we continue to investigate this matter," Newman said.

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## STATE NEWS

### Oregon removes assisted suicide wait for certain patients

SALEM — Legislation allowing certain terminally ill patients to have quicker access to life-ending medications under the state's first-in-the-nation assisted suicide law has been signed into law, Gov. Kate Brown's office announced Wednesday.

The law allows those with 15 days left to live to bypass a 15-day waiting period required under the Death with Dignity Act, something proponents say will reduce bureaucracy and bring relief to gravely ill people.

"This improvement will result in fewer Oregonians suffering needlessly at the end of their lives," said Democratic state Sen. Floyd Prozanski, who helped sponsor the legislation.

Some opponents argued that the move amounted to an unnecessary expansion of the state's physician-assisted suicide law, saying the law removes critical safeguards meant to ensure people are confident in their decision to end their own life.

"I don't want to make it any easier for any individual in any circumstance to take their life prematurely," Republican Rep. Duane Stark said during floor debate last month.

Those seeking life-ending medications had to make a verbal request for physician-assisted suicide, wait 15 days and then make a written request. They then had to wait an additional 48 hours before obtaining the prescription.

Under the new amendment, doctors can make exceptions to the waiting periods if the patient is likely to die before completing them.

### Governor signs bill to keep guns from stalkers and abusers

SALEM — Oregon will close a loophole in state law that allowed domestic abusers to illegally hold on to their firearms.

Gov. Kate Brown signed a measure Tuesday that threatens further penalties to domestic abusers who refuse to turn over their firearms following a court order. It strengthens a 2015 law meant to keep guns from those with convictions for domestic violence or stalking. Legislators had heard complaints that abusers were still holding onto their weapons by skipping court hearings.

Democrats were only able to push through modest gun law changes this year despite a supermajority in the Legislature. A more sweeping gun reform package was cast aside as part of a deal to convince Senate Republicans to return from a walkout over education funding.

Brown and other high ranking Democrats say they plan to work on more expansive gun control measures in the future.

— Associated Press

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