



Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian

Police stand as protesters gather during a demonstration on Thursday in Portland.

# Oregon officials call for investigation into federal response to Portland protests

Homeland Security chief decries violence

By NOELLE CROMBIE and EVERTON BAILEY JR.  
The Oregonian

*'AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENTS, NOT DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICS, SEND UNMARKED AUTHORITIES AFTER PROTESTERS.'*

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley

The U.S. attorney for Oregon said he wants an investigation into actions of federal officers who pulled Portland protesters off the street and into unmarked vehicles Thursday night.

Federal officers also used gas, smoke and impact munitions to press protesters away from two federal buildings. The confrontation between federal officers and protesters came hours after interim U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf arrived in Portland to meet with federal law enforcement officials.

"Based on news accounts circulating that allege federal law enforcement detained two protesters without probable cause, I have requested the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General to open a separate investigation directed specifically at the actions of DHS personnel," U.S. Attorney Billy Williams said in a statement.

Elected congressional leaders in Oregon, including U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, said they would call for an investigation into "the unrequested presence and violent actions of federal forces in Portland."

Merkley and others sharply criticized federal authorities following reports that federal law enforcement was using unmarked vehicles to arrest and detain protesters. Oregon Public Broadcasting reports that federal officers were detaining people who weren't near federal property.

"Authoritarian governments, not democratic republics, send unmarked authorities after protesters," Merkley, a Democrat, said on Twitter.

Video showed many protesters leaving the area near the federal courthouse late Thursday as smoke filled the air. Protests have taken place for nearly two months in Portland, since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May.

Wolf issued a blistering public statement Thursday calling out "local political leaders" for their refusal "to restore order to protect their city." He condemned "the rampant long-lasting violence" in Portland.

Wolf's nearly 1,700-word statement refers to Portland's demonstrators as both "violent anarchists" and a "violent mob."

He said they have destroyed property, including at the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse, and attacked "the brave law enforcement officers protecting it."

He blamed "local and state leaders" for failing to address "violent criminals in their communities" and said their inadequate response has "only emboldened the violent mob as it escalates violence day after day."

"This siege can end if state

and local officials decide to take appropriate action instead of refusing to enforce the law," he said. He said his agency "will not abdicate its solemn duty to protect federal facilities and those within them."

Wolf went on to detail damage to federal property in Portland, ranging from graffiti to other acts of vandalism.

Wolf's statement comes six days after a deputy U.S. Marshal fired an impact munition at a 26-year-old man, seriously injuring him, and four days after President Donald Trump said "Portland was totally out of control" until federal law enforcement responded and "very much quelled it."

Mayor Ted Wheeler said he's aware of Wolf's visit and wishes the Trump official hadn't come to town.

"We haven't been invited to meet with them and if we were, we would decline," Wheeler said.

Earlier this week, Wheeler took to Twitter to recap a conversation he had with Wolf. He said Wolf offered to help.

"I told the Acting Secretary that my biggest immediate concern is the violence federal officers brought to our streets in recent days, and the life-threatening tactics his agents use," Wheeler wrote Tuesday on Twitter. "We do not need or want their help."

"The best thing they can do is stay inside their building, or leave Portland altogether. Our goal is to end these violent demonstrations quickly and safely. And in the meantime, I asked him to clean up the graffiti on local federal facilities."

Gov. Kate Brown on Thursday issued a statement calling the remarks "political theater from President Trump." She accused Trump of seeking a confrontation in Oregon to win points in states like Ohio or Iowa.

Brown said she told Wolf that the federal government should remove "all federal officers from our streets."

"His response showed me he is on a mission to provoke confrontation for political purposes," she said. "He is putting both Oregonians and local law enforcement officers in harm's way."

Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese said he was part of a "statewide law enforcement delegation" invited to meet with Wolf to discuss the recent responses to Portland demonstrations. But Reese said he declined the invite after Wolf's statement Thursday morning.

The sheriff said while he values his agency's federal law enforcement partnerships, "the actions by out-of-state federal agents last weekend failed to display good decision making and sound tactical judgment."

"The use of force did not appear proportional to the actions of the demonstrators," Reese said in a statement. "I look forward to the thorough investigation into the matter by the U.S. D.O.J. Inspector General. These actions caused a significant setback in our local efforts to end the nightly violence around the Justice Center and in Portland."

Oregon Public Broadcasting and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

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# State budget writers unveil rebalancing plan

Attempt to shield schools

By PETER WONG  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature's chief budget writers have proposed to shield state aid to schools, but to cut almost \$400 million in other spending and draw down reserves to offset reduced tax collections during the coronavirus pandemic.

Elements of their plan, which legislative leaders released Thursday, will undergo public hearings next week. Each of the six budget subcommittees has been assigned a target for spending cuts.

Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders have said a second special session will be called later this summer — lawmakers already met in late June — to deal with a two-year budget that is projected to fall about \$3 billion short in anticipated tax collections.

The original budget from the tax-supported general fund and lottery proceeds, which constitute the state's most flexible spending, topped \$23 billion. Lottery proceeds are also projected to be down, largely because the Oregon Lottery's chief moneymakers are video terminals in bars and restaurants, which have curtailed operations during the pandemic.

The rebalancing plan does not take into account new federal aid to states that Congress may or may not include in a new coronavirus recovery effort. The Democratic-led U.S. House already has passed a \$3 trillion plan with aid to states included, but the

Republican majority in the Senate has balked at the price tag.

"The scale of this crisis highlights the critical need for further federal action to support state investments in essential services that provide safety and security for all Oregonians, including the state's most vulnerable populations," legislative leaders said in a statement.

The co-chairs of the Legislature's budget committee are state Sen. Betsy Johnson, of Scappoose; Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, of Beaverton; and Rep. Dan Rayfield, of Corvallis. All are Democrats.

Their plan agrees with Brown's stated goal of a \$9 billion state school fund, which the Legislature set in its original 2019-21 budget approved last year. About half that money already has been paid to Oregon's 190 school districts; July 1 marked the start of the second year of the state's two-year budget cycle.

From the plan: "The fund remains at \$9 billion, sparing students and teachers from devastating program cuts amid the uncertainty of the pandemic and holding critical investments in public education harmless at a time of great uncertainty."

To do so, the plan proposes to draw \$350 million from the Education Stability Fund, the reserve lawmakers created and voters approved in 2002 from Oregon Lottery proceeds. This amount will reduce the fund by just under half; lawmakers cannot spend the entire fund in a single budget cycle.

The plan also proposes an ending balance of a little over \$200 million, the bare minimum in recent decades. The balance is usually carried over into the next cycle, which starts in mid-2021.

Among other programs listed by the co-chairs as priorities for preservation are state aid to community colleges and state universities, Oregon Opportunity Grants for college students, housing stabilization, some health care and child welfare services, state prisons and community corrections, residential treatment capacity for youths, Oregon State Police trooper levels and labs and medical examiners.

Their plan also lists specific programs within several agencies: Agriculture, Forestry, Justice, Veterans Affairs and Water Resources, plus tax administration in the Department of Revenue.

But the plan calls for the six budget subcommittees to come up with \$387 million in other spending cuts.

In addition to \$350 million from the Education Stability Fund, the plan proposes to channel back into the general fund a total of \$213 million that the original budget earmarked for lessening the unfunded liability of school districts and other local governments for public pensions. However, the plan proposes to leave untouched the state's general reserve fund, which is estimated at \$949 million.

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