

IN BRIEF

State discloses virus cases at local schools

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed five new coronavirus cases at schools in Clatsop County.

All five cases were from the Astoria School District, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report. Two cases were students from Lewis and Clark Elementary School and three cases were students from Astoria Middle School.

Public meeting set for tsunami evacuation plan

The public can weigh in on the Clatsop County Tsunami Evacuation Facilities Improvement Plan during the last public information meeting, held virtually at 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

The plan considers how existing routes, such as walking and biking trails, can be improved for tsunami evacuation, including what can be done with facilities, trail connections and assembly areas, the county said.

Visit www.ClatsopTEFIP.org for more details. The county said a link to join the virtual meeting will be posted the day of the meeting.

Oser appointed to housing authority board

David Oser, of Astoria, was appointed to the board of the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority at the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners meeting on Wednesday.

Oser, a retired chief financial officer at the non-profit lender Craft3, was appointed to a four-year term through 2025.

The housing authority manages properties for people with low- and moderate-incomes in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties. The agency also oversees federal programs that aid people in need of housing assistance.

Portland attorney switches to state House race

Jennifer Kinzey, a Portland attorney who originally filed to run in the Democratic primary for state Senate District 16, which encompasses the North Coast, is no longer running for the seat.

She discovered that her residence falls just outside the Senate district.

Kinzey, who works at Ridehalgh & Associates, has instead filed to run in the Democratic primary for state House District 34 held by state Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton.

"I felt that was the place where I could make the biggest difference," she said in an interview.

— *The Astorian*

Inslee pauses long-term care program for 18 months

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The state of Washington has officially hit the pause button on a controversial long-term care insurance program known as WA Cares.

Gov. Jay Inslee on Thursday signed into law a bill that delays the start of the program until July 2023, giving lawmakers 18 months to make revisions to the program and reassess its long-term solvency.

— *Northwest News Network*

ON THE RECORD

Menacing

• Cameron Darnell Petteway, 33, of Steubenville, Ohio, was indicted this week for unlawful use of a weapon, menacing and disorderly conduct in the second degree. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in Clatsop County earlier this month.

Strangulation

• Quinlan Eric Kualii Hundley, 26, of Astoria, was indicted this week for strangulation, assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence and menacing constituting domestic violence. The crimes are alleged to have occurred earlier this month.

DUII

• Juan Jorge Ramon Rosales-Emanuel, 32, of Warrenton, was arrested on Thursday at S. Main Avenue and S.W. Fourth Street in Warrenton for driving under the influence of intoxicants, driving while suspended, driving uninsured, failing to carry and present his driver's license and failing to install an ignition interlock device.

• Kyle Kevin Schmidt, 34, of Olympia, Washington, was arrested on Wednesday evening at Youngs River and Capps roads for DUII and reckless driving.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Astoria Library Board, 5:30 p.m., Flag Room, 450 10th St.

Clatsop County Fair Board, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop, Astoria.

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

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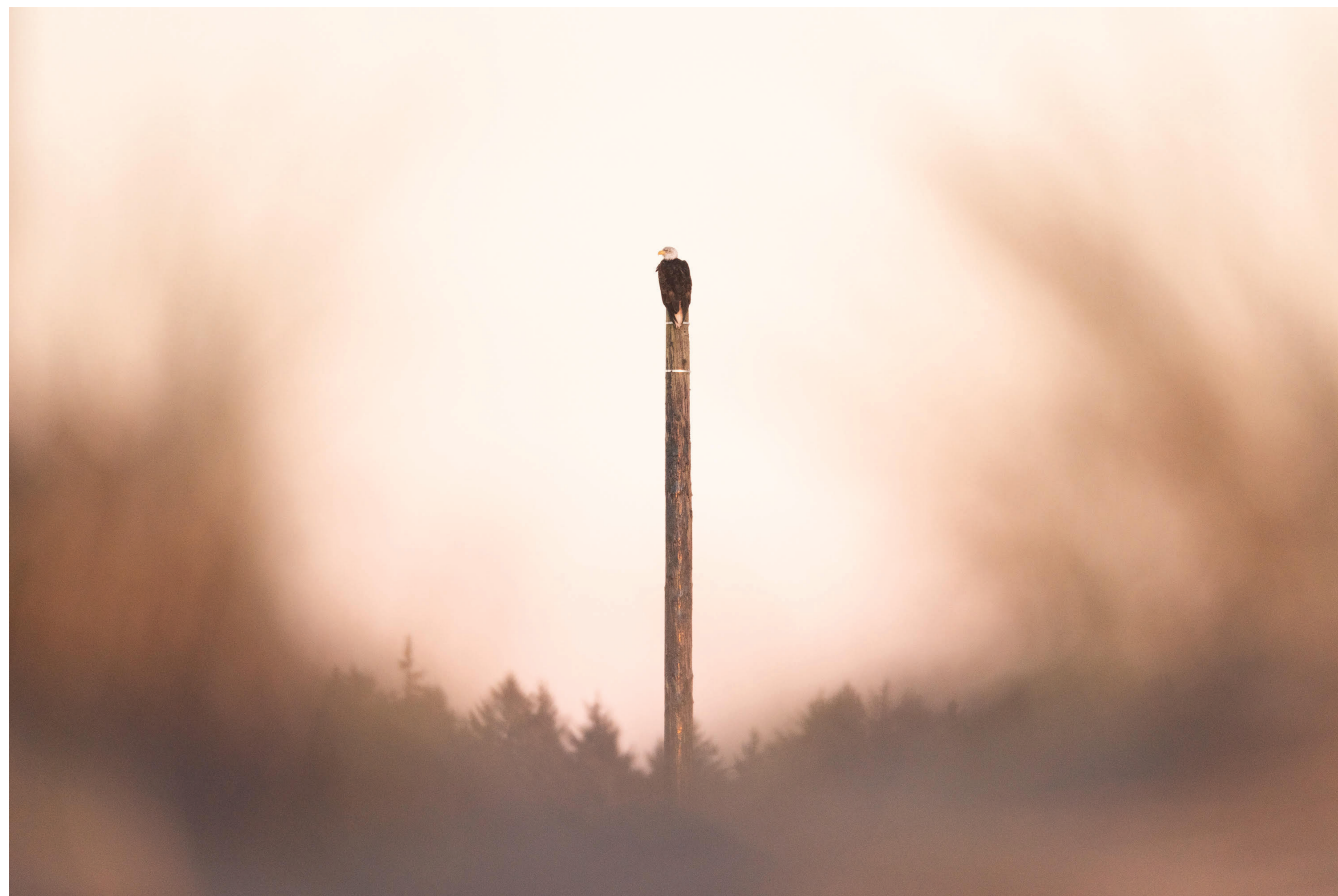
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PROUD PERCH

An eagle sits atop a pole at Fort Stevens State Park at sunset.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian



Job training a focus at state Legislature

Governor has a \$200 million plan

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

What may be Gov. Kate Brown's last policy initiative as governor — a \$200 million plan to boost training for future jobs in construction, health care and manufacturing — will be one of the top items for the new session of the Oregon Legislature.

Lawmakers will open the 35-day session on Tuesday as Oregon's top political leadership undergoes major changes. It will be the final scheduled session for Brown, a Democrat who is barred by term limits from running again, and for state Senate President Peter Courtney, the veteran Democrat from Salem who has led the Senate for a record two decades. He is retiring after a record 38 years as a legislator.

This session will be new for Rep. Dan Rayfield, a Democrat from Corvallis who has been nominated to succeed Tina Kotek, of Portland, after her record nine years as House speaker. Sen. Tim Knopp, of Bend, and Rep. Vikki Brees Iverson, of Prineville, led minority Republicans for the first time during the December special session. For Democratic Rep. Julie Fahey, of Eugene, it will be her first session as majority leader.

Given how contentious recent sessions have been from walkouts and slow-downs of minority Republicans in the past three years — and five special sessions, four of them prompted by the coronavirus pandemic — the job training plan may represent something that can win bipartisan approval.

The Future Ready Oregon plan emerged from the Governor's Racial Justice Council, which Brown appointed in 2020 after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and the racial justice protests that arose from the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. While some work focused on the state budget, the council also was asked to propose ways to deal with long-standing racial, social and economic inequities in Oregon.

"Let's be clear: COVID did not create these workforce challenges. They were created pre-pandemic. COVID exposed them," said Patsy Richards, who led the

'LET'S BE CLEAR: COVID DID NOT CREATE THESE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES. THEY WERE CREATED PRE-PANDEMIC. COVID EXPOSED THEM.'

Patsy Richards | leader of the council task force that shaped the plan

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The plan is aimed not only at past injustices, but future shortages of trained workers — estimated at 300,000 — in three growing economic sectors.

Richards, who is Black, said the plan takes into account the need for full participation in Oregon's workforce by racial and ethnic minorities, and also by women, young workers, military veterans and former inmates in jails and prisons.

"If we do not respond to these workforce indicators, we will miss the opportunity to lead the next generation of Oregonians to economic prosperity for all," said Richards, who is the director of long-term Care Works for the RISE Partnership in Portland.

Brown previewed the plan at the annual Oregon Business Plan conference in early December. One of the conference sponsors is the Oregon Business Council, which a decade ago set a goal of a 10% statewide poverty rate by 2020. Oregon's actual rate in 2021 was 12.44%, slightly less than the national average of 13.4%.

Duncan Wyse is the longtime president of the Oregon Business Council.

"We have immediate needs," he said. "Employers need talent right now, and there are a lot of Oregonians who are looking for new careers as they've gone through the pandemic. (This program) really is trying to reimagine how we provide education and training services to adults."

The plan would draw \$200 million from the state's tax-supported general fund and federal money from the American Rescue Plan Act, President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan that Congress passed almost a year ago.

Major spending categories are:

- \$92.5 million to expand existing programs. Among them: \$35 million for local workforce programs; \$20 million for apprenticeship

and pre-apprenticeship programs; \$17 million for Oregon's 17 community colleges, and \$10.5 million for youth training.

- \$95 million for competitive grants to organizations.

- \$10 million for navigation centers, which link workers with support services (emergency food, housing, child care, health care, transportation) to keep them employed.

- \$1 million for coordination of the three specific economic sectors targeted in the plan: Construction, health care and manufacturing.

Though Oregon has regained many of the jobs lost during the onset of the pandemic in spring 2020, "these are aimed at ensuring that Oregon's recovery is equitable," said Jennifer Purcell, Brown's workforce policy adviser.

"The disruption created by the pandemic has exacerbated the workforce crisis, as well as highlighted significant disparities in how our workforce system serves Oregon's communities of color," which Purcell said have been affected to a greater extent than Oregon as a whole. "Barriers to job readiness and career advancement persist, which is made more difficult by a workforce system that is often siloed, inefficient, and difficult to navigate."

The plan has its doubters.

"I am concerned about selecting winners and losers" among job sectors, said Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, a longtime labor official who is leaving the Legislature after 18 years.

Rep. Jami Cate, a Republican from Lebanon and a farmer, questioned how much

the plan would help in rural areas.

"Given that we have a shortage of workers already, in some cases we are going to be enticing them to quit," said Rep. John Lively, a Democrat from Springfield and chairman of the House committee that heard the plan. "There are complex issues that are going to be part of this conversation we need to have in this session."

Gail Krumenauer, economist for the Oregon Employment Department, spoke briefly to the House committee earlier this month. In a Jan. 19 conference call with reporters, she touched on why there are shortages now.

The agency reported 103,000 job vacancies in the private sector in the final quarter of 2021 — down from a record 107,000 in the previous quarter — and that employers said 76% were considered hard to fill. The previous record was 67,000 jobs in summer 2017.

"We are seeing this extraordinary level of hiring across the United States," Krumenauer said. "There are simply not enough available workers for this near-record level of job openings that employers are trying to fill."

For every 10 jobs open, she said, seven workers are potentially available. Average starting pay in the last quarter of 2021 was \$21 per hour, a 14% increase over the previous year, even taking inflation into account.

"There is not one thing that can magically be done to help all the workers find jobs with employers to supply all the workers they need," David Gerstenfeld, the acting director of the Oregon Employment Department, told reporters.

"Some people do not recognize they have transferable skills," he said. "We can help them fill a gap so they can move into some of those high-demand occupations."

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