

# The INSIDE

The Week in Review page 4



METRO page 7



Housing & Community page 8



page 9  
OPINION

CLASSIFIED/BIDS pages 10

# LOCAL NEWS



Members of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners wear face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

## Call for Tear Gas Ban

### Commissioners lead effort to protect children, others

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners has asked Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas to prohibit the use of chemical munitions by federal police when in close proximity to schools, neighborhoods, and other areas where vulnerable children and adults may work, live or play.

In a March 15 letter, the Board decried the use of tear gas in residential areas, parks, and other places where vulnerable individuals may be present, and called

on Secretary Mayorkas to ban or restrict their use by federal law enforcement officers.

Commissioner Sharon Meieran led the effort after hearing concerns from a Portland school and a community service provider located near the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in the South Waterfront area, the K-8 Cottonwood School of Civics & Science and REACH Community Development.

The ICE facility has been the site of many protests during

which federal law enforcement officers have deployed tear gas as a method of crowd control. Physical debris and residual toxic chemicals have been found on the schoolyard, causing significant concern about the environmental and physical health impacts on young children, teachers, and the surrounding neighborhood, county officials said.

“This indiscriminate use of chemical weapons does not just

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Racial Justice Bills Introduced

### Leaders call for criminal justice system overhaul

Oregon lawmakers are hearing from the Portland Urban League, civil rights groups and other calling for an overhaul of Oregon’s criminal justice system to address unequal impacts on people of color, from mass incarceration to police misconduct.

A legislative hearing was held last week that directed an appointed group of lawmakers and leaders from Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander and refugee communities called the Racial Justice Council to study potential changes to the criminal justice system and to provide results to the full Legislative no later than the end of the year.

Sen. Kayse Jama, D-Portland, a Somali refugee who co-found-



Sen. Kayse Jama



Nkenge Harmon Johnson

ed Unite Oregon to help uplift struggling Oregonians and the state’s first Muslim senator, testified in support of the measure, saying it is an important step in addressing the root causes of the most serious harms in law enforcement policies.

“The public safety system does not work for Black, Indigenous and people of color. Too

many fellow community members have lost their lives or been separated from their families and excluded from economic opportunities due to systemic racism in the public safety system,” Jama said.

The bill is geared to promote restorative justice, advance immigrant justice, and improve law enforcement accountability.

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