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# LOCAL NEWS

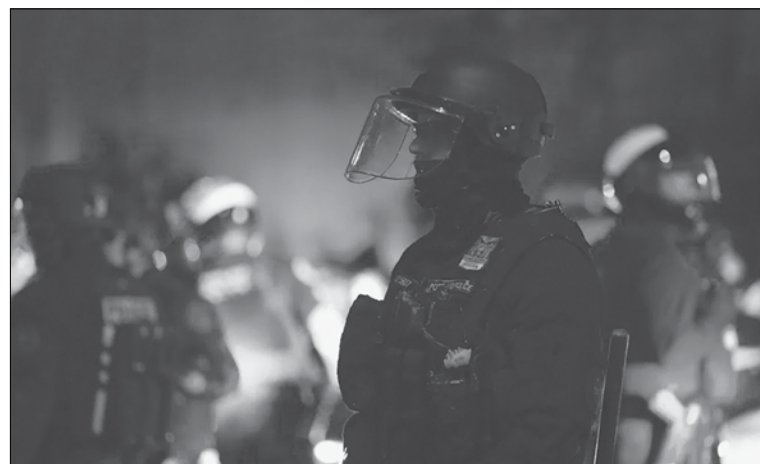
## Reconsidering Police Qualifications

### Oregon joins debate over police education requirements

Amid a renewed nationwide focus on police qualifications following the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols, an Oregon lawmaker has introduced a bill that would require law enforcement officers to complete at least two years of higher education.

Police departments have wrestled for years with officer education requirements. Many say that raising them would worsen current staffing shortages and make it harder to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds. But reform advocates say that continuing education past high school can equip officers with critical life skills that could help improve their interactions with the public.

“You’re learning, you’re reading about other communities, you’re reading about other people, you’re getting a sense of respect for people who you do not know, communities that you do not know,” said Democratic Oregon state Sen. Lew Frederick, the bill’s chief sponsor.



A Portland Police officer watches protesters rallying at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse on Sept. 26, 2020, in Portland, Ore. (AP Photo/Allison Dinner)

The bill, which was introduced last month, would push back against the recent trend of lowering police hiring standards by requiring two years of higher education for departments with less than 50 officers and a bachelor’s degree for departments with more than 50. It would apply to police, corrections, parole, probation and reserve officers. The bill would set police education requirements in state law. Generally, these requirements are determined by municipalities or individual departments.

The Portland Police Bureau in Oregon is among the agencies that have struggled to recruit. The city was gripped by months-long pro-

tests in 2020 following the racial justice demonstrations sparked by Floyd’s death, and has seen record numbers of homicides the past two years.

The police bureau only requires a high school or GED diploma. But that minimum requirement, it says, doesn’t necessarily result in hiring candidates with less education. While testifying against the Oregon bill on Tuesday, PPB Capt. Greg Pashley said that about 70% of the bureau’s sworn employees have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and that 46% of applicants have a two-year degree or higher. Another hearing for the Oregon bill has yet to be scheduled.

# Is Covid Over?

### Third anniversary of Oregon’s first case approaching

We are approaching the third anniversary of the first COVID-19 diagnosis in Oregon on February 28, and the federal government recently announced its plan to end the COVID-19 public health emergency on May 11.

Dr. Katie Sharff, Chief of Infectious Disease for Kaiser Permanente Northwest, is available for interviews to talk about her diagnosis of the first patient in Oregon; how far we have come and what we’ve accomplished as a community and health care system; advances in health care knowledge and delivery; and what the future may hold as we move forward.

Dr. Sharff has been on the front lines of the pandemic from the beginning, treating patients and studying emerging data, and meeting the pandemic challenges not just as a healthcare provider, but as a community member and mother of two young children.

“COVID-19 will never really be over, even with the public health emergency ending. But we are in a much brighter situation than we were a year ago,” said Dr. Sharff. “Science is always evolving, and we cannot predict what will happen, but we have made great medical advancements in the past three years. The public should be reassured that vaccines and therapeutics do work at preventing severe disease and hospitalization. New variants will emerge and we will need to be dynamic in our response moving forward and learn from our prior experiences - both the successes and missteps.”



Dr. Katie Sharff, Chief of Infectious Disease for Kaiser Permanente Northwest

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