

Election boosts public engagement in politics in Oregon

SALEM (AP) — Since the divisive November national elections, Oregon lawmakers and a member of its congressional delegation are seeing unprecedented public participation in the political process, and they are hoping the engagement will help solve a budget crisis.

"The level of public engagement since the November election has been astonishing to all of us," said House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland. She said attendance at her pre-legislative-session town halls more than tripled this year.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden marveled

on social media at the crowds that have come to his town halls. He posted photos of a flood of more than 1,500 people who filled all the bleachers and spilled onto the floor of a community college gymnasium in Albany last weekend.

"Turnout in Newport and Tillamook was off the charts," the Democratic senator added.

To hear directly from the public on the biggest issue facing lawmakers this year — a \$1.8 billion budget shortfall — the Legislature's committee that determines state budget policy announced on

Monday it will host public hearings throughout the state. The first one is in a hearing room at the Oregon State Capitol on Friday, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Those who live nearby will have the opportunity to share their thoughts about budget issues, said Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem. "It is an opportunity that we have not had locally for a while," Winters said.

Lawmakers must find ways to increase revenue and cut spending to make up for the shortfall, caused by increased health care costs, the fiscal impact of 2016 ballot measures, and Oregon's Public Employee Retirement

System unfunded liability.

"I feel like we have to bring it back to the public, and say, 'How best to do this?'" Kotek told Capitol correspondents on Monday.

Gov. Kate Brown's budget proposal would, among other "very difficult decisions," raise taxes on hospitals, insurance companies and on tobacco and liquor sales; close a loophole that allows many businesses to avoid corporate income taxes; and deny customary funding increases for public higher education.

The public hearings could be

passionate as people make a case on how the proposed \$20.6 billion for the 2017-19 biennium should be spent.

"I am really looking forward to hearing from Oregonians about how they think we should prioritize," Kotek said. She said that, as an example, some might want to ensure money goes to covering drugs for chronic diseases, while others want to make sure no one loses health insurance.

"Those are competing interests when we're trying to do a budget," Kotek said.

School district bans Confederate flag after fight

NORTH BEND (AP) — An Oregon school district banned the Confederate flag from school property following a fight between two girls, one of whom was wearing a hat that included the symbol.

North Bend Superintendent Bill Yester says the punches were thrown last week at the high school campus. Neither student has been disciplined as of yet and there were no serious injuries.

Yester contends the ban doesn't violate free expression because schools have the legal authority to provide an environment free of harassment, and district policy allows principals to prohibit clothing that distracts from the educational process.

The World newspaper of Coos Bay reports protesters unhappy with the new policy were outside North Bend High on Monday, holding up Confederate flags, a Gadsden flag and the flag of the United States.

Rumors that the school district banned the American flag were incorrect.



North Bend High School students Dallas Stockton, left, and Autumn Sisson display American and Confederate flags across the street from the school Monday, in North Bend. The school district banned the Confederate flag from school property following a fight between two girls, one of whom was wearing a hat that included the Confederate symbol.

Bethany Baker/The Coos Bay World via AP

Live reports that Brown, who ran on a platform of ethics reform, has proposed creating a records advocate but has repeatedly wavered on who should direct the new position. On Monday, Brown's counsel on government accountability Emily Matasar said the position would be under the Secretary of State.

A bill in the Legislature filed at the request of Brown would create a public records advocate. The advocate would serve as a mediator between journalists, citizens and public agencies.

Matasar said Monday in a Legislative hearing that Brown

is in talks to put the position under the Secretary of State, where the state archives are housed.

Tuition hike possible at Oregon State

CORVALLIS (AP) — Students are facing possible tuition hikes at Oregon State University as administrators prepare to receive less state funding than requested.

University president Ed Ray told the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* that a tuition hike between 2 and 3 percent would still mean an estimated annual shortfall of \$20 million

in operating expenses.

Lawmakers are expected to pass a two-year budget this summer.

State funding proposals are roughly \$90 million to \$100 million less than the \$765 million requested by the state's seven public universities.

Ray said the university is unable to hold off on setting tuition rates until after lawmakers set a budget.

Administrators will likely submit a tuition increase to the university's board of trustees in March.

Ray said the university will also need to find ways to trim costs.

Gov. Brown suggests putting records advocate under Sec. of State

PORTLAND (AP) — Gov. Kate Brown is open to housing a public records advocate in the Secretary of State's office, rather than under her control.

The Oregonian/Oregon-

New bill: Workers can't be barred from smoking pot off-hours

SALEM (AP) — Employers in Oregon would be prohibited from banning marijuana use by employees during their days off under a bill introduced in the Oregon Senate.

The bill is among several that cover marijuana, whose recreational use was legalized in a statewide ballot measure in 2014.

Bill No. 301 would make it unlawful for employers to condition employment on "refraining from using any substance that is lawful to use in Oregon."

Measure 91 legalized recreational marijuana in the state, but it did not affect existing employment law.

The bill aims to amend a state law about use of tobacco to include cannabis and any other substance that is legal in the state. But if a collective bargaining agreement prohibits off-duty use of such substances, that rule would take precedence.

Some of the other pot-related bills in the Oregon Senate and House would:

- Change the name of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which regulates and licenses recreational marijuana, to the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission
- Provide for the OLCC to regulate the consumption and sale of marijuana items at temporary events
- Establish a task force that would identify existing legal barriers to consuming cannabis in social settings. The task force would, among other duties, also identify opportunities for consumption by residents and visitors of cannabis in social settings and evaluate their economic potential.
- Waive fees for medical marijuana cards for veterans who have serious disabilities incurred or aggravated during military service
- Tax retail sales of marijuana seeds
- Establish an Oregon Cannabis Commission to fulfill duties, functions and powers relating to medical marijuana use, and removing those duties from the Oregon Health Authority.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Wintry mix, mainly after noon	Cloudy, a little rain; warmer	Mostly cloudy with a shower	Mostly sunny	Partly sunny
32° 31°	47° 34°	48° 31°	45° 28°	42° 28°
30° 29°	44° 29°	45° 34°	47° 26°	44° 27°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	34°	24°
Normals	45°	29°
Records	65° (2015)	-19° (1929)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.13"
Month to date 0.23"
Normal month to date 0.32"
Year to date 1.88"
Last year to date 1.73"
Normal year to date 1.70"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	33°	25°
Normals	46°	29°
Records	68° (2015)	-25° (1929)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.02"
Month to date 0.04"
Normal month to date 0.24"
Year to date 1.73"
Last year to date 1.15"
Normal year to date 1.52"

SUN AND MOON

	Full	Last	New	First
	Feb 10	Feb 18	Feb 26	Mar 5

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Rain, heavy at times today; windy in the afternoon. Heavy rain and strong winds tonight.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Ice this morning, then rain and ice across the north; rain or snow showers in central parts. Rain elsewhere.

Western Washington: Periods of rain today; arriving in the afternoon in central parts.

Eastern Washington: Snow today, accumulating a coating to an inch; however, icy mix across the south.

Cascades: Rain today; snow levels as low as 3,500 feet this morning, then rising to near 7,000 feet.

Northern California: Rain, heavy at times today; however, a little rain in the interior mountains.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	48	45	r	53	42	r
Baker City	35	34	i	43	30	r
Bend	42	36	r	50	34	sh
Brookings	57	52	r	55	45	r
Burns	39	34	sh	45	28	c
Enterprise	37	34	sh	45	35	r
Eugene	52	48	r	56	42	r
Heppner	35	29	i	47	34	r
Hermiston	30	29	i	44	29	r
John Day	44	39	sh	50	36	r
Klamath Falls	48	44	r	50	33	r
La Grande	39	38	r	48	38	r
Meacham	37	35	sn	47	33	r
Medford	57	49	r	59	39	r
Newport	54	52	r	54	45	r
North Bend	59	53	r	56	46	r
Ontario	41	36	sh	45	33	c
Pasco	30	28	i	39	31	r
Pendleton	32	31	i	47	34	r
Portland	41	40	r	53	42	r
Redmond	44	40	i	53	34	sh
Salem	50	48	r	55	44	r
Spokane	31	29	sn	44	33	r
Ukiah	40	33	r	49	36	r
Vancouver	42	41	r	54	42	r
Walla Walla	33	30	i	47	36	r
Yakima	32	30	sn	42	31	sn

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	40	20	s	38	20	s
Hong Kong	67	50	sh	64	52	s
Jerusalem	58	42	s	55	41	pc
London	42	30	sh	39	30	c
Mexico City	77	45	s	75	42	s
Moscow	9	7	s	23	19	c
Paris	45	36	c	42	30	pc
Rome	57	46	pc	57	46	sh
Seoul	36	17	c	30	15	s
Sydney	78	70	sh	84	72	s
Tokyo	48	36	c	43	36	r

UV INDEX TODAY

0 1 1 0 0 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: As warmth holds over the South and the Atlantic coast, colder air and spotty snow will expand over the Midwest today. Heavy rain will drench areas from the northern California coast to western Washington.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 94° in McAllen, Texas Low -29° in Clayton Lake, Maine

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thur.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	64	36	pc	66	41	s
Atlanta	72	41	c	53	28	pc
Atlanta City	65	36	c	39	19	r
Baltimore	64	34	pc	38	18	sn
Billings	14	10	c	48	37	c
Birmingham	74	39	t	51	28	pc
Boise	47	43	sh	53	38	c
Boston	56	31	c	32	10	sn
Charleston, SC	76	60	t	64	32	c
Charleston, WV	56	31	c	32	17	sf
Chicago	30	11	sn	22	16	s
Cleveland	38	22	sn	25	16	sf
Dallas	79	39	s	63	47	pc
Denver	56	31	pc	67	42	pc
Detroit	35	18	c	24	14	sn
El Paso	73	47	pc	77	50	pc
Fairbanks	8	-7	c	-3	-22	pc
Fargo	4	-8	s	17	15	pc
Honolulu	78	64	pc	80	67	s
Houston	87	54	pc	72	50	s
Indianapolis	38	17	sn	24	16	s
Jacksonville	79	64	t	72	37	c
Kansas City	34	13	c	35	29	pc
Las Vegas	71	55	pc	76	60	pc
Little Rock	75	34	s	51	31	s
Los Angeles	70	59	pc	76	60	pc
Louisville	51	27	c	34	21	pc
Memphis	70	34	t	46	30	s
Miami	87	69	pc	86	62	pc
Millwaukee	29	8	c	19	15	s
Minneapolis	13	0	pc	17	14	s
Nashville	66	32	t	40	24	pc
New Orleans	77	57	c	65	47	pc
New York City	61	32	pc	33	18	sn
Oklahoma City	60	26	s	55	40	pc
Omaha	23	7	sn	29	25	pc
Philadelphia	63	33	pc	35	19	sn
Phoenix	77	57	pc	83	59	pc
Portland, ME	49	22	c	24	7	sn
Providence	58	30	c	32	10	sn
Raleigh	73	54	pc	55	23	c
Rapid City	13	4	c	44	40	pc
Reno	61	49	sh	61	42	r
Sacramento	64	58	r	62	52	r
St. Louis	38	21	c	34	28	s
Salt Lake City	55	42	c	58	45	pc
San Diego	69	58	pc	72	58	pc
San Francisco	64	58	c	63	53	r
Seattle	40	39	r	52	42	r
Tucson	77	51	s	86	55	pc
Washington, DC	67	35	pc	40	23	sn
Wichita	44	19	s	47	38	pc

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.