

# Governor restructures staff to respond to Trump edicts

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau



**Brown**

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown has restructured her staff to respond to rapid policy changes coming down from the Trump administration and potential reforms to the state pension system and state revenue.

“Oregon faces unprecedented challenges, new and institutional, on both the statewide and national scale,” Gov. Brown said in a prepared statement Tuesday, March 7. “The appointments I’m announcing today are part of a larger internal staffing adjustment informed by the

Oregonians I’ve met from across the state who’ve told me how my office can better serve them. To seize the opportunity that challenge has presented, it is imperative the Governor’s Office is poised to respond nimbly and bring stability to the vital services Oregon families rely on.”

The changes entail new job descriptions and titles for two existing staffers, Gina Zejdlik and Debbie Zoreski, and a new part-time position of senior adviser on transformation and budget stability. Former Rep. Peter Buckley, D-Ashland, has been appointed to fill the

new part-time role.

As former co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means from 2008 to 2016, Buckley oversaw the state budget-writing process.

In his new role, he will focus on building stability for major cost drivers in state government and potential revenue reform. He will earn a salary of more than \$5,400 per month for 20 hours of work.

In a text message to the Pamplin Media Group/EO Media Group Capital Bureau, Buckley said he plans to maintain his job working at the Southern Oregon Education Service District in Medford, where he is project manager of the Southern Oregon Success program. He will

work remotely from Southern Oregon but will report to work in Salem for meetings throughout the Legislature’s 160-day legislative session, which started Feb. 1.

Buckley represented Southern Oregon from 2005 until January. In addition to Ways and Means, he served on the House education, rules and transportation committees.

Zejdlik, a staffer in the Governor’s Office since 2013, has been appointed as deputy chief of staff with a monthly salary of \$10,828.

Zejdlik will lead the Governor’s Office’s evaluation of and response to new federal policies. She most recently led the chief of staff search and transition of duties to new Chief

of Staff Nik Blosser.

Her resume also includes positions as deputy legislative counsel for the Oregon Legislature and chief of staff, legislative director, and interim elections director during Brown’s tenure as secretary of state.

In her new role as senior director of budget and children’s policy, Koreski will coordinate the governor’s budget for the next biennium and retain her policy advising duties related to housing and human services.

Koreski joined the Governor’s Office in December 2016 after serving as associate vice president for government relations at Portland State University. She will earn a monthly salary of \$10,828.

# Oregon lawmakers consider limiting biodigester tax credits

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon’s anticipated budget shortfall has prompted lawmakers to consider limiting tax credits for processing livestock manure into energy in biodigesters.

Biodigesters break down manure, releasing methane gas which is used to generate electricity. The remaining solids have many uses.

They are expensive, and farmers have used the tax credits to offset the costs.

Under House Bill 2853, tax credits would only be available for manure processed in biodigesters that were operational before the end of 2016.

The credit effectively costs Oregon about \$4 million a year in foregone tax revenue and has the potential to grow more expensive due to the proposed construction of a large dairy, said Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, during a March 7 hearing on HB 2853.

Barnhart said he’s not “wedded” to the idea of disqualifying biodigesters that became operational in 2017 or later from tax credits and would appreciate alternative suggestions from the House Agriculture Committee.

“If we don’t do anything, this credit is going to increase significantly over the next couple years,” he said.

The question pertains to how Oregon encourages the adoption of biodigesters, said Barnhart.



**Steve Smith, a technician for Farm Power Tillamook LLC, explains the functioning of a dairy biodigester near Tillamook, in this file photo. Lawmakers are considering limiting tax credits for biodigesters to facilities operational before 2017.**

The tax credit is one approach, but Oregon could simply require large “confined animal feeding operations” to cover the cost instead of using the general fund, he said.

Lawmakers should consider the extent to which the tax credit encourages the development of new large CAFOs, Barnhart said.

“They have a number of problems associated with them,” such as air and water pollution, he said.

Representatives of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, the Oregon Farm Bureau and Threemile Canyon Farms — a dairy near Boardman — testified against HB 2853, arguing the tax credit has promoted air quality and contributed to renewable energy development.

By relying on regulation rather than incentives, the government would effectively impose a new tax on dairies as well as their customers, said Len Bergstein, representative of Threemile Canyon Farms.

“There’s a reason we’ve decided to go in a different direction in Oregon,” Bergstein said.

By limiting the tax credit, lawmakers would unwittingly be playing into the anti-dairy agenda of certain activists who oppose new facilities in Oregon, he said.

Dairy producers already made a sacrifice last year, when they agreed for the tax credit to be reduced from \$5 per wet ton of manure to \$3.50 in exchange for keeping the incentive until 2021, Bergstein said.

# Lawmakers eye homeowner tax breaks for budget fix

SALEM (AP) — Faced with an estimated \$1.6 billion deficit in the upcoming two-year budget cycle, policymakers in Salem are looking to potentially boost the state’s revenue stream directly from Oregon homeowners.

State lawmakers are hosting debates this week on two proposals that would reduce or nix entirely the allowable deductions that some taxpayers can claim from mortgage interest and property taxes.

While the state so far hasn’t officially estimated how much extra revenue might be raised, Jody Wiser, founder of Tax Fairness Oregon, told lawmakers this week her organization recently calculated that Oregon homeowners were saving \$1.9 billion per biennium from mortgage interest and property tax deductions and also capital gains-tax exclusions.

“These help people buy bigger homes, but they don’t necessarily help people buy a home,” said Wiser, who supports both proposals but also acknowledged the changes may be “abrupt” for those who’d be dually affected by each.

Wiser’s comments were heard during the first debate Tuesday for House Bill 2771, which would revoke property tax deductions for the wealthiest Oregon homeowners who earn at least \$125,000 annually, or \$250,000-plus when married and filing jointly. Others may deduct only a percentage of their property taxes, the rates of which would be determined by how much income they earn above \$50,000, or \$100,000 filing jointly.

Additional revenues as a result of the changes would go to the state’s general fund, the biggest pot of discretionary spending money for the Legislature and

governor that mostly benefits education, health care and various human services.

Lawmakers will hear testimony Thursday for House Bill 2006, which would allow mortgage interest deductions from loans only on the homeowner’s primary residence, excluding vacation homes or other secondary properties. The deductions would also be capped at different thresholds depending on the homeowner’s taxable income above or below \$100,000, or \$200,000 filed jointly.

Additional revenue resulting from those changes would be diverted to the Oregon Housing Fund to boost funding for various housing-assistance programs that are currently strained by the ongoing housing affordability crisis occurring statewide.

Federally, there’s already a cap on mortgage interest deductions for the first \$500,000 of any loan for single filers, or the first \$1 million for joint filers; deductions from second mortgages are allowed on the first \$100,000 of loan debt.

House Republican leader Mike McLane blasted the measures as “toxic” policies put forth by the Democratic majority.

“At a time when housing affordability is already a major concern in our state, HB 2006 and HB 2771 would only make it more difficult for Oregon families to pay their bills,” McLane said in a statement.

## 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.

## EAST OREGONIAN

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## AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Cloudy with a little rain; cool	Breezy with periods of sun	Cloudy with a couple of showers	Cloudy with a shower or two	Remaining cloudy
<b>PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST</b>				
52° 46°	57° 35°	52° 42°	57° 41°	64° 49°
<b>HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST</b>				
51° 46°	60° 34°	52° 44°	61° 40°	65° 48°

### ALMANAC

**PENDLETON**  
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	45°	41°
Normals	53°	34°
Records	73° (2004)	18° (1897)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.05"  
Month to date 0.41"  
Normal month to date 0.29"  
Year to date 4.33"  
Last year to date 2.87"  
Normal year to date 2.80"

**HERMISTON**  
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	53°	43°
Normals	55°	32°
Records	72° (2005)	15° (1931)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.02"  
Month to date 0.17"  
Normal month to date 0.26"  
Year to date 3.63"  
Last year to date 1.92"  
Normal year to date 2.50"

### SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today 6:19 a.m.  
Sunset tonight 5:53 p.m.  
Moonrise today 3:01 p.m.  
Moonset today 4:44 a.m.

Full	Last	New	First
Mar 12	Mar 20	Mar 27	Apr 3

### REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Periods of rain today. Rain and drizzle tonight, except a shower in the south.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Considerable cloudiness today with a shower; however, dry in the south.

Western Washington: Times of rain today.

Eastern Washington: Rain today; however, snow and rain in the north; a bit of snow, accumulating up to an inch in the mountains.

Cascades: Periods of rain today.

Northern California: Mostly cloudy today and tonight. Intervals of clouds and sunshine tomorrow.

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	53	45	r	50	37	sh
Baker City	49	36	r	56	27	pc
Bend	52	41	r	52	33	c
Brookings	55	47	r	57	43	c
Burns	48	34	c	50	21	pc
Enterprise	46	40	r	47	28	pc
Eugene	57	48	r	59	40	c
Heppner	51	43	r	54	33	pc
Hermiston	51	46	r	60	34	pc
John Day	55	47	r	56	36	pc
Klamath Falls	57	39	r	57	30	pc
La Grande	51	44	r	54	33	pc
Meacham	48	44	r	52	32	c
Medford	61	46	r	63	38	c
Newport	53	48	r	52	42	sh
North Bend	57	50	r	56	44	c
Ontario	55	42	c	58	31	c
Pasco	49	42	r	60	34	pc
Pendleton	52	46	r	57	35	pc
Portland	55	49	r	56	38	sh
Redmond	56	38	r	56	30	c
Salem	56	49	r	57	40	sh
Spokane	39	36	r	49	29	c
Ukiah	48	41	r	50	29	pc
Vancouver	55	48	r	54	39	sh
Walla Walla	51	48	r	59	40	sh
Yakima	48	37	r	59	30	pc

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	61	31	s	65	34	s
Hong Kong	69	63	pc	74	67	pc
Jerusalem	72	50	s	61	45	s
London	57	41	pc	55	47	pc
Mexico City	72	51	pc	75	51	pc
Moscow	42	30	pc	42	35	r
Paris	57	44	sh	58	41	pc
Rome	65	43	pc	68	42	s
Seoul	49	26	s	49	28	s
Sydney	72	65	pc	74	64	pc
Tokyo	53	40	s	54	40	s

	Today		Friday	
	Boardman	Pendleton	WSW	WSW
Boardman	SSE 4-8	WSW 10-20	WSW	WSW
Pendleton	SSE 6-12	WSW 10-20	WSW	WSW

### UV INDEX TODAY

0 1 2 1 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:** Rain and snow showers will affect northern New England today. Showers and storms will gather from Texas to Florida. Rain and snow will fall on the Northwest. Rain and snow will develop over the Ohio Valley.

**Yesterday's National Extremes:** (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 89° in McAllen, Texas      Low 3° in Crosby, N.D.

	Today			Fri.			Today			Fri.			
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	
Albuquerque	73	42	s	74	44	s	Louisville	72	39	s	49	26	pc
Atlanta	74	57	s	71	41	pc	Memphis	75	55	pc	60	40	pc
Atlanta City	58	41	s	45	22	sn	Miami	80	66	s	82	65	pc
Baltimore	67	42	s	47	31	c	Millwaukee	41	15	sn	28	12	pc
Billings	25	17	sn	31	20	sn	Minneapolis	33	4	c	21	7	pc
Birmingham	74	61	s	70	39	pc	Nashville	74	50	s	57	31	pc
Boise	58	46	c	59	35	c	New Orleans	77	62	pc	77	62	t
Boston	48	30	s	39	16	sn	New York City	56	36	t	41	20	sn
Charleston, SC	76	55	s	79	44	pc	Oklahoma City	80	44	t	63	50	sh
Charleston, WV	68	43	s	44	17	c	Omaha	55	20	pc	35	20	pc
Chicago	43	21	pc	31	16	pc	Philadelphia	62	41	s	45	21	sn
Cleveland	48	29	pc	32	16	sf	Phoenix	86	59	s	88	59	s
Dallas	79	63	pc	77	61	t	Portland, ME	40	22	s	35	9	sf
Denver	69	37	pc	71	40	pc	Providence	51	28	s	37	16	sn
Detroit	43	21	pc	32	13	pc	Raleigh	75	50	s	72	32	pc
El Paso	84	50	pc	84	52	pc	Rapid City	36	12	c	33	15	sn
Fairbanks	1	-9	pc	12	-9	pc	Reno						