

# Health care provider tax gets closer to ballot

By **CLAIRE WITYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Legislation designed to pay for Oregon's expanded Medicaid program through a tax on providers and insurers got a step closer to the ballot Wednesday.

State Rep. Julie Parrish, R-Tualatin/West Linn; Rep. Cedric Hayden, R-Fall River; and Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, filed paperwork to start collecting signatures to get a tax on health care providers on the ballot.

Oregon already assesses certain urban hospitals 5.3 percent of net revenues in order to help pay for the costs of the Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid, the federal program that provides health coverage for the poor and other qualifying groups.

Legislation approved last month would continue the assessment, create a "true tax" of .7 percent of net revenues, create a new 4 percent assessment on rural hospitals

and a 1.5 percent tax on insurers.

Taxing providers allows states to draw substantial federal funds to pay for Medicaid. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, all states except Alaska had some kind of provider tax in the 2016 fiscal year.

In Oregon, the provider tax is expected to collect more than \$600 million in the next two years, and to leverage nearly \$1.9 billion in federal funds to pay for Medicaid.

Health care providers receive a portion of the total Medicaid funds in exchange for providing care to Medicaid patients.

If the petitioners collect the required 58,789 signatures in about three months, the legislation will "freeze" and parts of it will not be implemented as planned. The tax on insurers, for example, would not start on Jan. 1, 2018, as the legislation outlines.

Parrish is critical of that aspect of the bill, and said Wednesday it amounted to a

"sales tax on health care" for people who buy insurance on the individual market.

Esquivel voted for the provider tax — the lone Republican to do so and a key vote supplying the required three-fifths majority approval in the House.

Esquivel said in a prepared statement Wednesday that although he voted for the provider tax, he was concerned about recent initiatives in health care led by Democrats, such as mandating coverage of reproductive health services for Oregon residents, regardless of immigration status. That bill was passed by the Legislature Thursday.

"I supported (the provider tax bill) because I think those who qualify under the federal law should have a way to see the doctor," Esquivel said. "It was a hard vote, but it needed to be done. What's ensued since is a major overreach by the House Democrats to drive new costs and expand programs when we can't

fully fund programs for our veterans and citizens. That's not how those tax increases were presented to me."

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, signed the provider tax legislation Monday. In a statement Wednesday, she called it "critical to protecting the health care coverage of Oregonians and stabilizing the commercial insurance market."

"Any delay would jeopardize the care of more than 1 million Oregonians who rely on the Oregon Health Plan, drive up costs of Oregonians who buy their insurance on the individual market, and limit health care options for rural Oregonians," Brown said.

It's not yet clear when the tax could go to the ballot: the House is scheduled to vote Thursday on when to hold the election. Democrats are pushing for a January election to decide the issue sooner, a move that Parrish opposes.

## BRIEFLY

### Oregon lawmakers pass controversial abortion bill

SALEM (AP) — Insurance companies in Oregon would be required to cover abortions and a variety of other reproductive services at no cost to the patient under a \$10 million reproductive health bill approved by the state Legislature.

Oregon already has among the most liberal abortion laws in the nation, which are absent of otherwise common requirements for waiting periods or spending limits on taxpayer funds, among others.

House Bill 3391 was approved by the Oregon Senate Wednesday in a 17-13 vote along party lines. The bill heads to Gov. Kate Brown. The measure requires reproductive health be covered in all insurance plans at no cost to the patient regardless of income, citizenship status or gender identity.

The bill would also allocate almost \$500,000 over the next two years to expand cost-free reproductive health coverage, including abortions, to immigrants who are otherwise ineligible for Medicaid.

### GOP lawmakers launch fight against Oregon's new health tax

SALEM (AP) — Three Republicans in the Oregon House have officially launched an effort to block a multimillion-dollar health care tax to fund Medicaid before it can go into effect.

Reps. Julie Parrish, Cedric Hayden and Sal Esquivel filed initial paperwork with state elections officials on Wednesday for a voter referendum on House Bill 2391, which Gov. Kate Brown signed into law Monday.

If they can gather nearly 59,000 valid signatures before the bill goes into effect in early October, HB 2391 would be placed on hold until voters can decide its fate at the ballot in November 2018. But Democrats are working to move the vote up to January 2018 instead.

The Legislature passed the \$670 million tax package on health insurers and providers to sustain coverage for more than 350,000 local Medicaid expansion recipients

### Seattle cyclist dies in Oregon crash

REDMOND (AP) — Authorities say a 32-year-old Seattle woman was killed in a bicycle crash near Redmond, Oregon.

KOMO-TV reports 32-year-old Katie Jenks was discovered by passing motorists Wednesday morning near Borden Beck Wildlife Preserve.

Redmond authorities responded and declared her dead at the scene.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office says she was traveling west when she went off the shoulder, suffering fatal injuries.

The sheriff's office says they've found no witnesses to the crash and say a vehicle or other obstruction wasn't involved.

The sheriff's office says there may have been a mechanical issue with her bicycle. She was not wearing a helmet.

Any possible witnesses are asked to contact the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office at 541-693-6911.

# Rainbow Gathering begins to disperse after July 4 peak

By **AMANDA PEACHER**  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The highlight of the seven-day Rainbow Family Gathering occurred Tuesday — a mass peace prayer after a morning of silence at the event.

Thousands of campers held hands in a grassy meadow in the Malheur

National Forest and meditated for world peace. The silence was broken when a parade of children in colorful costumes and face paint marched into the center of the circle.

"It's very simple but it's very moving," said a Rainbow Family member who gave only the name "Chinkipin," from Hood

River. "This is a constitutional right to come here and gather, for the purpose of peaceful assembly, praying for peace."

The pinnacle moment of the event followed tragedy: two deaths at the gathering. One unidentified man had collapsed over the weekend and a second man had a heart attack on Monday evening,

according to sources at the event. Law enforcement is conducting investigations into both deaths.

The gathering promotes peace, love and acceptance. It continues through Friday.

The Forest Service says the gathering is unsanctioned but the agency can do little to stop the thousands of participants.

# Police identify Oregon man who tried to seize helicopter

HILLSBORO (AP) — Authorities in a Portland, Oregon, suburb released the identity Wednesday of a man who they say tried to steal a helicopter at gunpoint before being fatally shot by police.

Holden Austin Gorka, 25, had no known address and no known mental health or drug abuse issues, the Hillsboro Police Department said in a statement.

An autopsy was completed Tuesday but results of toxicology tests won't be ready for another two to three months, authorities said.

The name of the officer

who fatally shot Gorka will be released Thursday, the statement said.

According to authorities, Gorka jumped a fence at the Hillsboro Airport on Monday and held a flight instructor and a student at gunpoint, firing at least one shot before police showed up. That shot — and possibly a second misfire — were directed away from the victims, who were in the helicopter as it was warming up for takeoff.

The man got into the heli-



Gorka

copter, but officers arrived before he could take off. The man then ran across a street and into a field, where he was shot.

The man died at the scene shortly before noon. No other injuries were reported.

Investigators have to yet to establish the man's motive for trying to steal the helicopter, but authorities said Wednesday that he was not connected to the Hillsboro Aero Academy, the airport's

flight-training school.

A witness, Christopher Neal, told reporters that he and his family were watching planes at the small airport when he saw a man walking in wearing a gray hoodie. The man looked at them and then started running toward the fence. He pulled a gray mask over his face, Neal said.

The Hillsboro Airport, established in 1928, is one of three airports operated by the Port of Portland.

It's about a 40-minute drive west of the Portland International Airport, the region's main airport.

## 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	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
<b>HOT</b>				
Partly sunny and very hot	Sunshine and very warm	Very warm with plenty of sun	Plenty of sunshine	Sunny and pleasant
<b>100° 68°</b>	<b>98° 61°</b>	<b>95° 63°</b>	<b>93° 61°</b>	<b>89° 57°</b>

### PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
<b>100° 68°</b>	<b>98° 61°</b>	<b>95° 63°</b>	<b>93° 61°</b>	<b>89° 57°</b>

### HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
<b>104° 69°</b>	<b>102° 64°</b>	<b>99° 66°</b>	<b>96° 64°</b>	<b>92° 60°</b>

### ALMANAC

#### PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	99°	57°
Normals	86°	57°
Records	107° (2007)	38° (1932)

#### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"  
Month to date 0.00"  
Normal month to date 0.05"  
Year to date 11.30"  
Last year to date 6.47"  
Normal year to date 7.62"

#### HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	100°	59°
Normals	86°	57°
Records	108° (1968)	42° (2012)

#### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"  
Month to date 0.00"  
Normal month to date 0.04"  
Year to date 6.59"  
Last year to date 4.64"  
Normal year to date 5.74"

### SUN AND MOON

	Full	Last	New	First
Sunrise today	5:13 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	8:47 p.m.			
Moonrise today	6:42 p.m.			
Moonset today	3:35 a.m.			

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

### REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Low clouds followed by sunshine today. Increasing clouds tonight.

Eastern Washington: Mostly sunny today. A moonlit sky tonight. Mostly sunny tomorrow.

Cascades: Sunny much of the time today; a passing shower in central parts.

Northern California: Low clouds followed by sunshine at the coast today; sunny elsewhere.

## REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	66	53	pc	66	53	pc
Baker City	95	53	pc	94	53	s
Bend	94	58	s	91	53	s
Brookings	62	52	pc	64	52	pc
Burns	96	51	pc	96	52	s
Enterprise	95	56	pc	94	54	s
Eugene	85	53	s	82	50	s
Heppner	97	63	s	94	57	s
Hermiston	104	69	s	102	64	s
John Day	99	62	pc	96	58	s
Klamath Falls	91	50	s	91	52	s
La Grande	97	61	c	95	57	s
Meacham	95	57	pc	93	54	s
Medford	99	63	s	96	61	s
Newport	61	52	pc	61	49	pc
North Bend	63	53	pc	63	51	pc
Ontario	102	64	pc	104	68	s
Pasco	102	63	s	103	60	s
Pendleton	100	68	pc	98	61	s
Portland	88	60	s	82	56	s
Redmond	99	55	s	95	49	s
Salem	88	57	s	83	54	s
Spokane	98	67	s	98	65	s
Ukiah	95	54	pc	92	50	s
Vancouver	86	57	s	80	53	s
Walla Walla	101	72	pc	100	67	s
Yakima	101	65	s	102	61	s

## WORLD CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	79	71	t	89	72	pc
Hong Kong	87	81	t	86	81	t
Jerusalem	85	69	s	84	66	s
London	82	63	t	82	62	pc
Mexico City	72	54	pc	70	56	t
Moscow	63	48	r	59	49	r
Paris	93	68	t	91	65	s
Rome	88	66	t	89	67	s
Seoul	90	74	t	81	75	r
Sydney	63	45	s	65	47	s
Tokyo	82	73	pc	84	74	pc

## WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Friday
Boardman	WSW 4-8	WSW 8-16
Pendleton	WNW 4-8	W 7-14

## UV INDEX TODAY

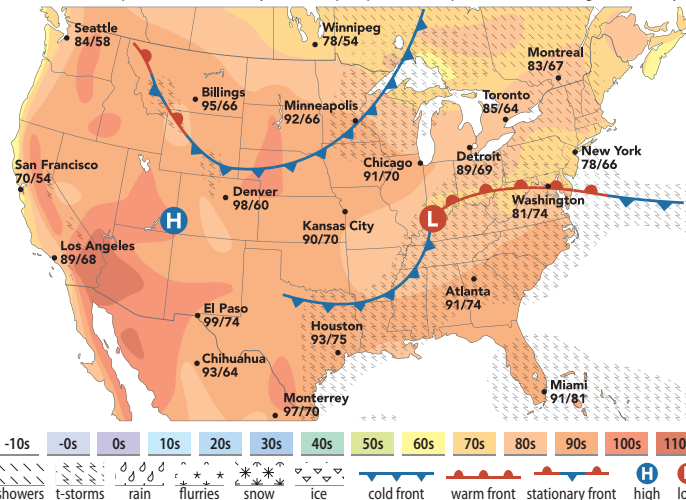
2	5	7	7	5	2
8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.					
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme					

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: Storms will dot the Southeastern states as showers dampen New England today. As rain soaks parts of the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic, storms will blast the Upper Midwest. Most of the West will be dry.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 117° in Needles, Calif. Low 30° in Aurora, Colo.

## NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.			Today			Fri.			
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	
Albuquerque	97	70	pc	95	70	t	Louisville	80	70	r	90	69	t
Atlanta	91	74	pc	87	73	pc	Memphis	87	73	t	92	77	pc
Atlanta City	74	69	c	82	72	r	Miami	91	81	sh	91	80	pc
Baltimore	78	70	r	87	70	r	Millwaukee	86	67	pc	76	60	t
Billing	95	66	t	95	67	s	Minneapolis	92	66	t	82	63	s
Birmingham	90	74	s	88	74	pc	Nashville	84	70	t	89	74	pc
Boise	100	69	pc	103	69	s	New Orleans	89	77	pc	90	77	t
Boston	80	65	pc	71	66	r	New York City	78	66	r	80	72	r
Charleston, SC	96	77	pc	92	78	t	Oklahoma City	93	69	s	96	70	s
Charleston, WV	80	69	t										