



This file photo shows a Dick's Sporting Goods sign at one of their stores. A 20-year-old man in Oregon has filed a lawsuit against Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart after he says they refused to sell him a rifle.

20-year-old sues Dick's, Walmart over their new gun policies

PORTLAND (AP) — A 20-year-old man from Oregon has filed lawsuits against Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart, alleging the two retailers discriminated against him when they refused to sell him a rifle because of his age. Dick's and Walmart restricted gun sales to people 21 and older in the wake of the Florida high school massacre. The 19-year-old accused in the school slaying legally bought the AR-15 used in the attack. The lawsuits, obtained by The Associated Press, are believed to be the first filed over the new gun policies. Oregon law allows residents to buy shotguns or rifles starting at 18. Tyler Watson's lawsuits, which were filed against the retailers in Jackson and Josephine counties, both ask a judge to put a stop to the retailers' new gun sale policies and award punitive damages because of the "willful nature of the discrimination." On Tuesday, the state Bureau of Labor and Industries said in a letter to state legislative leaders that the bureau would accept complaints from Oregonians who feel they have been discriminated against by the policies. Without commenting on the merits of Watson's lawsuits, Commissioner Brad Avakian said state law currently only allows for age-related exemptions for alcohol and marijuana sales.

The bureau will present a bill to add a similar age restriction for gun sales to the legislature next year for consideration, he said, adding that the policies seemed "appropriate" because they attempted to make public spaces safer. Avakian also urged lawmakers to pass a ban on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines, among other things. Legal papers filed Monday say a store owned by Dick's Sporting Goods in Medford refused to sell Watson a .22-caliber Ruger rifle on or around Feb. 24. The other suit says a Walmart in Grants Pass refused to sell him an unspecified type of rifle on March 3. Watson did not know about the restrictions when he tried to buy a rifle, his attorney Max Whittington, told The Oregonian/OregonLive, which first reported the lawsuits Monday. "He was really just trying to buy a rifle," Whittington told the newspaper. Watson, of Gold Hill, could not be reached for comment. Walmart spokesman Randy Hargrove said the retailer plans to defend the new policy. "We stand behind our decision and plan to defend it," he said. "While we haven't seen the complaint, we will respond as appropriate with the court." A representative of Dick's didn't immediately return a call from The AP on Tuesday.

Oregon Democrats hope for 'blue wave'

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — With several GOP seats up for grabs this year and low approval ratings for President Trump, Oregon Democrats hope to be the next destination for the "blue wave" — the phenomenon of Democrats taking over state legislative seats around the nation. The filing day for seeking election in the May 15 primary was 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 6. As of the deadline, 17 had people registered as candidates for governor, 39 for the state Senate, 129 for the state House, and 35 for Oregon's five U.S. House seats in Congress, according to the Associated Press.

"The level of enthusiasm and engagement we're seeing in the Democratic Party is unprecedented," said Jeanne Atkins, chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon. "With Trump in the White House promoting his toxic vision for the country and Republicans doing little to stand up to him, legislative seats across the nation are flipping from red to blue in astounding numbers. Here in Oregon, our county parties are fired up, and Democrats have a strong field of candidates running in every corner of the state."

In the Oregon House of Representatives and Senate, Democrats believe they have a good chance of achieving a supermajority — enough members to pass tax measures with a three-fifths vote. Such an outcome would give the party unilateral power provided Democrats all agree on the topic at hand. Democrats need to only hold on to the House and Senate seats they have and turn one Republican seat blue in each chamber to achieve a supermajority. They already have 35 out of 60 seats in the House and 17 out of 30 in the Senate.

Both parties will likely fight hard to claim open seats, particularly in two swing districts — House District 54 in Bend and Senate District 3 Southern Oregon. Republicans Rep. Knute Buehler of Bend and Sen. Alan DeBoer of Ashland hold those seats now, and neither is seeking reelection. Buehler is seeking the GOP nomination for governor to face off with Gov. Kate Brown in the November general election. "We have every reason to believe a Democrat will win in that (Senate District 3) given the outcome the presidential election and Referendum 101," said DPO spokesperson Molly Woon, referring to the health-care funding measure that passed in a January special election. "Buehler's district and De Boer's Senate district ... are ripe to be flipped to the (Democrats)," said Jim Moore, political science professor and director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University.

Democrats also have their eyes on other Republican seats up for reelection in the House, including five open seats and newly-appointed Republican Rep. Jeff Helfrich's position in Hood River. In addition to Buehler's, four other House seats held by Republicans will be without incumbents in November. Since Trump took office in January 2017, 39 state legislative seats across the country have "flipped" from Republican to Democrat, according to a recent count by the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. The group assists in election campaigns for Democratic candidates seeking election to state legislatures.

In state elections, Gov. Kate Brown is seeking a second and final term but must first edge out Democratic challengers with little name recognition. They are Ed Jones of Redmond and Candace Neville of Eugene. A smorgasbord of Republicans will face each other for the GOP nomination for governor. In the race are Buehler of Bend, Greg C. Woodridge of Portland, Sam Carpenter of Bend, Keenan W. Bohach of Keizer, Jonathan I. Edwards III of Portland, Jeff Smith of Fairview, David W. Stauffer of Portland, Jack W. Tacy of Lebanon, Brett Hyland of Portland. Four members of the Independent Party of Oregon also have entered the gubernatorial race, Dan (Mr. P) Pistoresi of Lincoln City and Skye J. Allen of Portland, Shawn Lieblich of Eugene and Patrick Starnes of Brownsville.

In the nonpartisan race to succeed Brad Avakian as state labor commissioner, former lawmaker Val Hoyle of Eugene, Jack Howard of La Grande and Lou Ogden of Tualatin have filed for election.



Onlookers watch for updates on a list of candidates running in the May 2018 primary elections, hours before the deadline to file on Tuesday in Salem. A screen was set up in the state House of Representatives showing the lists of candidates, with the public allowed access.

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Unemployment rate stays at 4.1 percent

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon's unemployment rate held steady in January as employers added 5,000 jobs. The state Employment Department said Tuesday the jobless rate was 4.1 percent — the same as in December. Strong employment gains in manufacturing, construction and private educational services were partially offset by a weak month for leisure and hospitality. Another unemployment measure, known as U-6, was at 8.5 percent

in January. That's also unchanged from December. Men accused of igniting wildfire arraigned LAKEVIEW (AP) — Three Lane County men have been arraigned on charges stemming from

a wildfire that scorched thousands of acres in south-central Oregon last July. Authorities say the men were near Summer Lake when they added pyrotechnics to targets and shot at the targets. They say it sparked the Ana Fire, which destroyed a hunting cabin.

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