

Brown, Buehler spar in final debate before Election Day

PORTLAND (AP) — Distinctions emerged between Oregon's leading gubernatorial candidates in their final debate as the two clashed on public pensions, immigration, the state's housing crisis and several other hot-button issues.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that Rep. Knute Buehler on Tuesday sought to make the case a Republican can lead a distinctly Democratic state, declaring flatly he would approve no new restrictions on reproductive rights as governor. He accused Democratic Gov. Kate Brown of being ineffectual during her long stint in state government, noting that Oregon school districts are cutting teaching positions despite record revenue.

"The most important question facing all of us right now is our underperforming K-12 educa-

tion system," Buehler said, arguing that Oregon's public pension obligations are siphoning money away from school spending. "Those dollars aren't getting into the classroom," Buehler said.

For her part, Brown sought to undercut Buehler's credibility — attacking his positions on the environment, school spending and for courting the vote of abortion opponents before he became the Republican gubernatorial nominee.

"Rep. Buehler tells some voters one thing and other voters another," Brown said. "Unfortunately, that game won't work tonight because the whole state is watching."

Beyond the rhetoric, the candidates took substantive, divergent positions on key topics. The candidates returned repeatedly to the



Rep. Knute Buehler, left, shakes hands with Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday at their final debate at KGW-TV studios in southwest Portland.

state's public pension crisis, the state's biggest fiscal issue. Buehler said he

wants to transition state employees to a private-sector style, 401(k) retirement

plan and accused the governor of "pandering" to public employee unions by

raising pay before instituting broad pension reform.

While Brown said public employees "need to have some skin in the game," and pay some of their own pension costs, she didn't answer a direct question of how much they should pay. The governor resisted the notion of wholesale cuts, attacking Buehler directly: "I think it's easy for a millionaire to say he's going to cut the retirements of hard-working Oregonians. I'm not willing to do that."

The candidates were in broad agreement that political discourse must improve, and both faulted President Donald Trump for his words and actions. They also endorsed the scientific consensus around climate change, though Brown endorsed stricter rules governing carbon emissions, while Buehler said he wants more flexibility.

Audit: Problems cleaned up in Oregon Department of Energy

By CLAIRES WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — In the wake of a scandal over the state's handling of energy tax incentives, the Oregon

Department of Energy has cleaned up its process, state auditors say.

The state Audits Division report, released Wednesday, assessed whether energy

officials implemented recommendations made earlier by state and private auditors and state lawmakers. Auditors found the Energy Department had changed

its operations to enact the recommendations.

The steps ranged from seemingly trivial — agency officials no longer use whiteout, as a precaution against document manipulation — to more significant. For example, the agency hired an internal auditor to keep tabs on agency activities.

Other state agencies can learn something from the Energy Department's trials, auditors said.

"Without reflection on how Oregon's various tax credit programs may be failing to operate as intended, the state runs the risk of continuing to pour millions of dollars into flawed projects or falling prey to fraud and bribery schemes," the state Audits Division said in its report.

Auditors cited an example of a state tax credit gone awry: Business Oregon approved \$12 million in state tax credits for a wind project in Cave Junction, despite red flags.

The project shut down after 20 months.

The report lists what other agencies could do to safeguard tax incentive programs. These include setting up a compliance program, monitoring the work of accountants attesting to projects receiving incentive funds and performing annual internal audits.

At the Energy Department, the program offering tax incentives to businesses to use renewable energy started in 1979, expanded significantly in 2006, and then was shut down by the Legislature in 2014.

Two years later, auditors detected suspicious activity in several projects associated with the business energy tax credit.

Seattle energy consultant Martin Shain and former energy department employee Joe Colello subsequently were convicted for a scheme to profit from buying and

selling the tax credits.

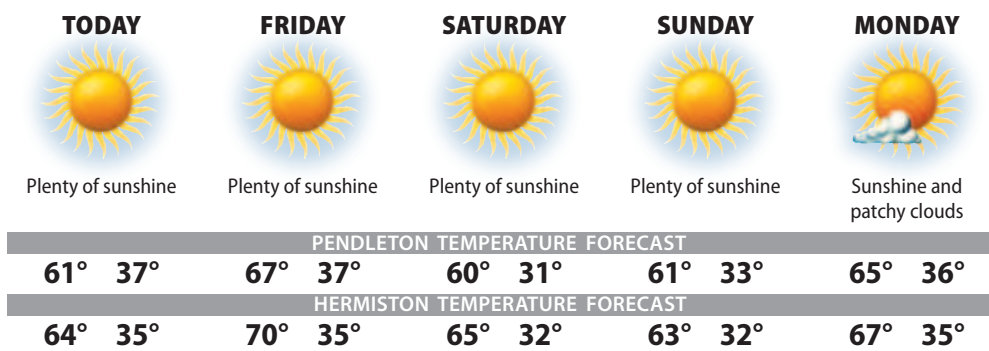
Reporter Claire Withycombe: cwithycombe@eomediagroup.com or 503-385-4903. Withycombe is a reporter for the East Oregonian working for the Oregon Capital Bureau, a collaboration of EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group, and Salem Reporter.

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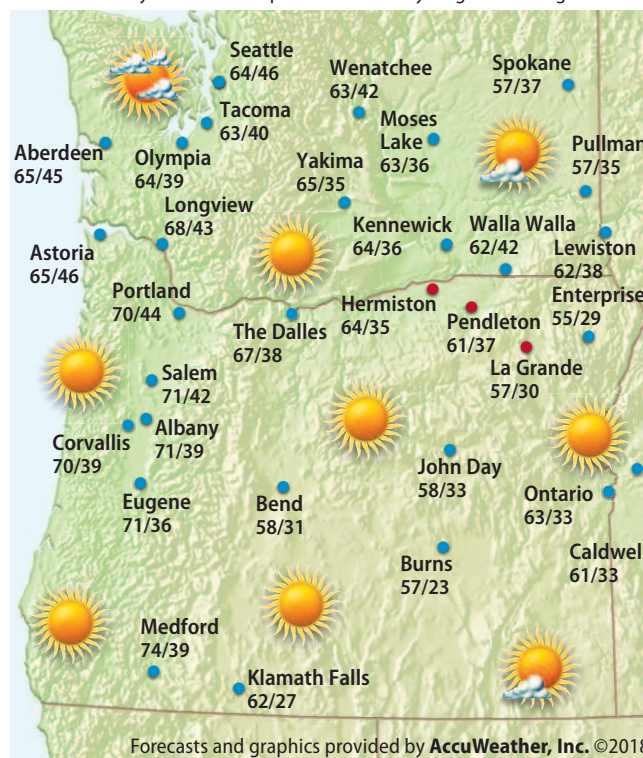
For a complete listing of regional events, visit eastoregonian.com

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Yesterday | 57° | 46° |
| Normals | 66° | 41° |
| Records | 88° (1934) | 24° (1916) |

PRECIPITATION

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.01" |
| Month to date | 1.39" |
| Normal month to date | 0.31" |
| Year to date | 7.91" |
| Last year to date | 12.36" |
| Normal year to date | 9.25" |

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Yesterday | 62° | 49° |
| Normals | 68° | 40° |
| Records | 87° (1934) | 26° (1931) |

PRECIPITATION

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | Trace |
| Month to date | 1.14" |
| Normal month to date | 0.17" |
| Year to date | 6.29" |
| Last year to date | 7.04" |
| Normal year to date | 6.73" |

WINDS (in mph)

| | Today | Fri. |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Boardman | SW 3-6 | W 4-8 |
| Pendleton | NW 4-8 | W 6-12 |

SUN AND MOON

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Sunrise today | 7:06 a.m. |
| Sunset tonight | 6:17 p.m. |
| Moonrise today | 9:48 a.m. |
| Moonset today | 8:09 p.m. |

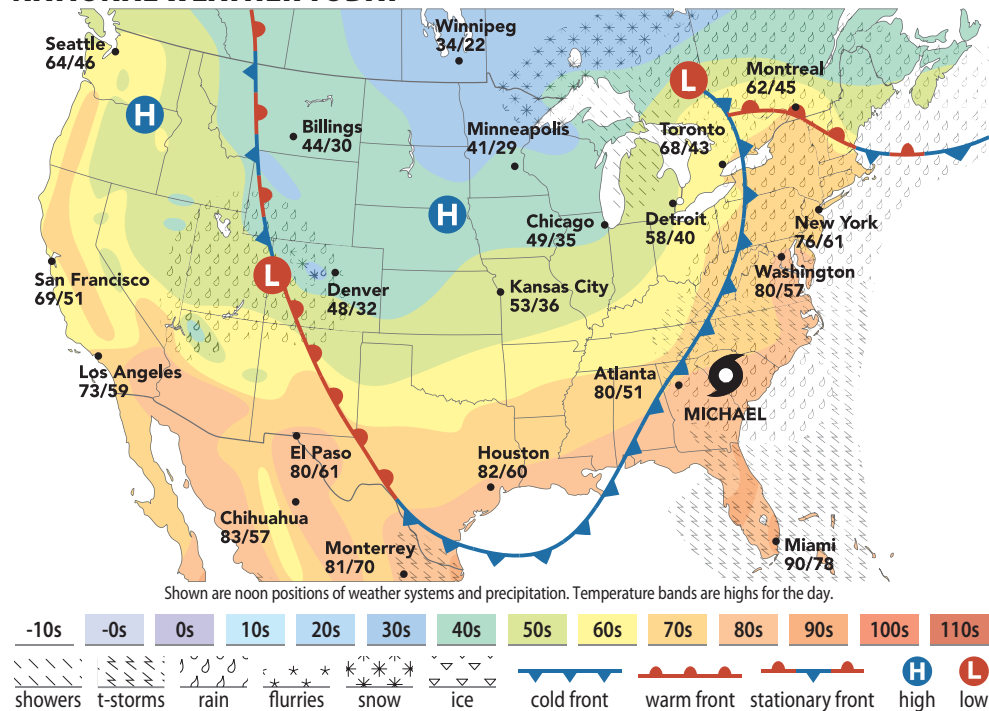


NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 95° in McAllen, Texas Low 8° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



BRIEFLY

Wildfire costs hit record high of \$514.6 million 2018

SALEM (AP) — New data shows the cost of fighting wildfires in Oregon reached an all-time high \$514.6 million in 2018.

According to data from Northwest Interagency Coordination Center, Oregon's costs skyrocketed past last year's record-setting total of \$447 million.

The Statesman Journal reports that all totaled, Oregon had 1,880 fires that burned 846,411 acres or 1,322 square miles — an area larger than Rhode Island.

The number of acres burned isn't a record, but it's well above historic averages and continues a trend of more extreme fire seasons.

The most expensive wildfires were in southwest Oregon, where a mid-July lightning storm ignited 160 wildfires during a historically hot and dry summer.

The biggest conflagration was the combination Klondike and Taylor Creek fires, which burned together west of Grants Pass. Combined, they torched 220,000 acres and cost \$128 million.

Woman sues to stop debt collectors from coming to her door

PORTLAND (AP) — A Portland woman who says debt collectors keep showing up at her door looking for someone she swears she doesn't know has filed a \$400,000 lawsuit to make them stop.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports Caitlin Kelly is suing a Portland furniture store called Aaron's, saying a demand letter and slips of paper left at her home indi-

cate the store is trying to collect on a debt owed by Steven.

The lawsuit says men from the store have banged on her door nearly a dozen times this year, sometimes in the early morning hours waking her young children.

Kelly says she has called store management to resolve the issue, but she says they don't believe that he doesn't live there.

Kelly is suing only the local franchise, NW Freedom Corp and not the national chain to which it has ties. A representative for the franchise declined to comment.

Police: Officers shoot armed suspect at motel

PORTLAND (AP) — Authorities say an armed suspect was fatally shot by police at a motel in southeast Portland.

No one else was hurt. Portland Police responded to the motel Wednesday morning. The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that officers had reports of two people fighting near the motel.

Police spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley said arriving officers learned one of the subjects was armed with a knife and had attempted to stab another person. Officers learned a man matching the suspect's description had entered a room and was holding a woman hostage.

The suspect was not identified.

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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