

U.S. homeless count grows in 2018, Seattle among top

By GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

A federal report released Monday provides a possible glimmer of hope for the homeless crisis that has gripped many cities up and down the West Coast.

The number of people living on the streets in Los Angeles and San Diego, two epicenters of the homelessness crisis, fell this year, suggesting those cities' efforts to combat the problem could be starting to pay off.

In Los Angeles, the count fell by 3 percent after a sharp increase the year before. Peter Lynn, executive director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, said that can be credited to results of six months of stepped-up homeless services after Los Angeles County voters raised taxes to help in 2017.

Later that year, Los Angeles city voters approved a bond issue to provide more affordable housing — a factor Lynn said will start showing up in future counts.

"We're also dealing with the countervailing pressure of housing markets that are pretty unforgiving," he said.

Cities in California, Oregon and Washington have driven an overall spike in the number of homeless people nationwide in recent years.

This year's count continued that trend, showing 552,800 people without homes across the country, up by about 2,000 from 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's point-in-time tally. It was the second consecutive year of declines.

The number of homeless referred to as unsheltered — those living in the streets, encampments or other open places — was more than 194,000 nationwide. That also was up from last year.

More than 37,000 of the unsheltered were in the Los Angeles area this year, down 2 percent from 2017.

San Diego, California's second most populous city, also saw a decline in both total homelessness and those on the streets. After a hepatitis A outbreak spread among the homeless population and killed 20 people in 2017, the city turned to industrial-sized tents to house hundreds of people. As the tents went up, officials also cited people camping on downtown streets. Encampments downtown cleared out quickly, but the number along the San Diego River doubled.

The city is considering a ballot measure to raise money for affordable housing in 2020.



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File
In this May 24, 2018, file photo, a man sleeps on the sidewalk as people behind line up to buy lunch at a Dick's Drive-In restaurant in Seattle.

Nationwide, the overall increase this year was driven by a 2 percent rise in the unsheltered homeless population — those living in vehicles, tents and on the streets — along with 4,000 people in emergency shelters after hurricanes, wildfires and other disasters, according to HUD. The numbers of homeless veterans and families continued their long-term declines.

At a time when rents are rising faster than wages — especially for lower-income

people — an essentially stagnant count is a not a bad sign, said Steve Berg, vice president for programs and policy at the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

"Given what's going on with rental housing, it's not exactly good news. But it means communities are pushing back against the headwinds," said Berg, who like other advocates urges caution about reading too much into one-year trends in the homelessness

The homelessness data picture is incomplete because several West Coast areas with large populations, including San Francisco, Portland, Oregon, and California's Orange County, did not conduct new counts of unsheltered homeless populations this year. Those places will do fresh surveys in early 2019.

Homelessness has exploded along with a soaring economy in several West Coast cities in recent years and has become a hot local political issue. From 2015

through last year, voters on the West Coast approved more than \$8 billion in spending — most of it in tax increases — to address homelessness.

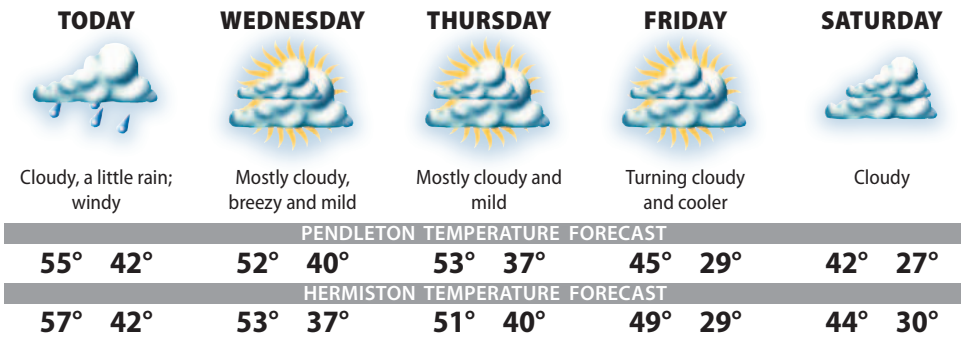
In Seattle, which has the nation's largest homeless population outside New York or Los Angeles, the count this year rose to more than 12,000 — more than half of them unsheltered. The number was less than 9,000 just four years ago, and the city has been wrestling with what to do about the problem.

The City Council in May passed a \$48 million tax on businesses to raise money for affordable housing. But under pressure from Amazon, Starbucks and other companies, it repealed it the next month.

Another place in the West with a rising number was the Phoenix area, where the total count this year was nearly 6,300, up 12 percent from the previous year. About two-fifths of people without homes there are in shelters.

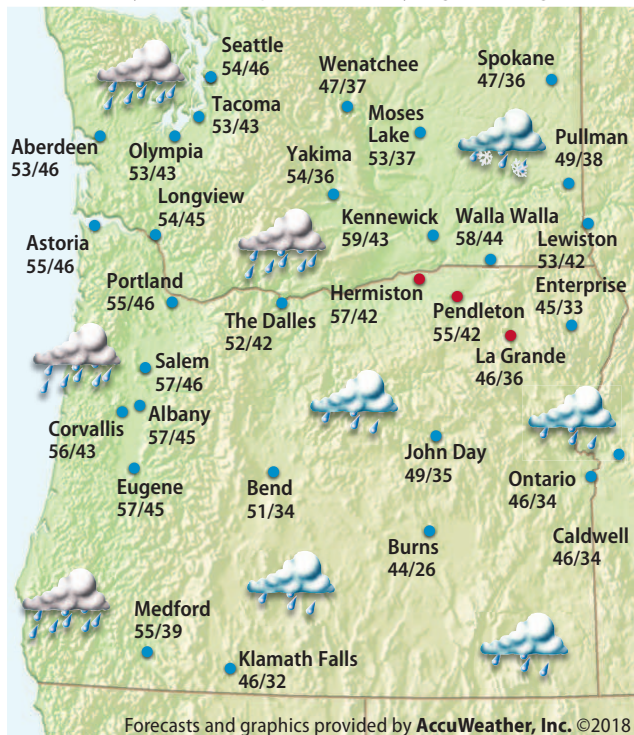
The region's status as the fastest-growing county in the U.S., with 200 people a day moving in, is a factor in the rising homeless number, said Anne Scott, a human services planner who coordinates the count for the Maricopa Association of Governments.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



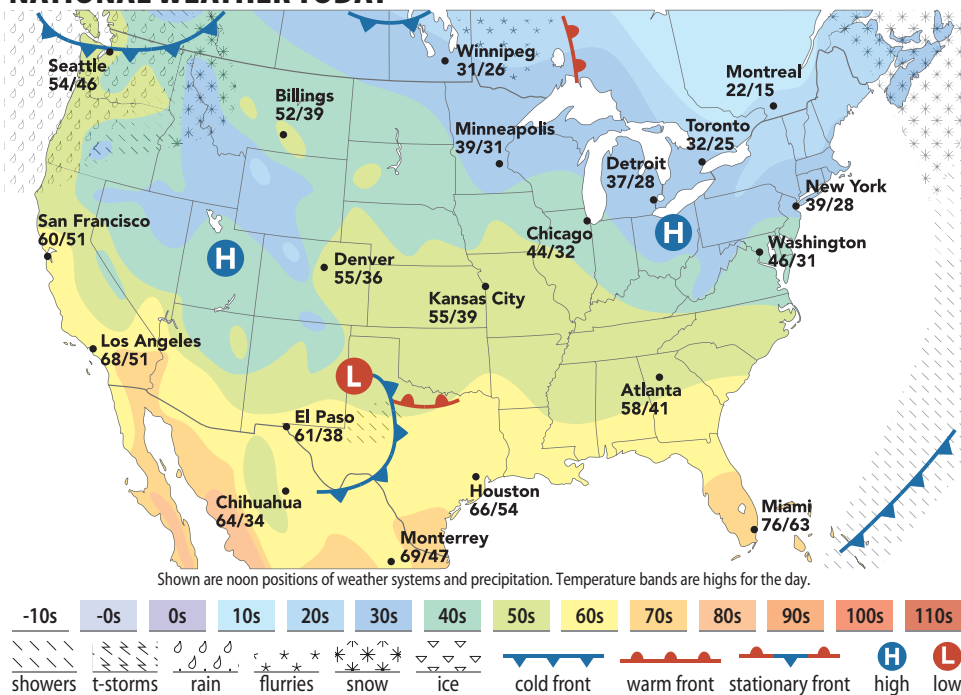
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	54°	40°		
Normals	39°	26°		
Records	62° (1917)	-12° (1964)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"			
Month to date	0.39"			
Normal month to date	0.80"			
Year to date	9.26"			
Last year to date	15.43"			
Normal year to date	12.27"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	52°	34°		
Normals	39°	27°		
Records	61° (1937)	-13° (2016)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.01"			
Month to date	0.24"			
Normal month to date	0.85"			
Year to date	7.20"			
Last year to date	8.84"			
Normal year to date	9.32"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Wed.		
Boardman	SW 10-20	SW 4-8		
Pendleton	SSW 12-25	SW 10-20		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	7:31 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	4:12 p.m.			
Moonrise today	1:53 p.m.			
Moonset today	2:35 a.m.			
	Full	Last	New	First
	Dec 22	Dec 29	Jan 5	Jan 13

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 75° in Columbus, Texas Low -9° in Gunnison, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Boquist reprimanded for secretly distributing documents to colleagues

By CLAIRE
WTHYCOMBE
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A state senator caught on tape slipping anonymous packets under the doors of at least seven other senators last month has been warned his conduct could be considered workplace harassment.

The letter's public disclosure is the latest in a series of actions by Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, that have raised eyebrows and prompted concern at the Capitol.

Boquist's conduct recently drew a written warning from the Legislature's top in-house lawyer, Dexter Johnson.

"I strongly urge you to be mindful (of) your actions and the appearance of your actions so that concerns about workplace harassment

are not raised again," Johnson, the legislative counsel, wrote in a "memo of concern" dated Dec. 5.

Such communications are typically confidential, but Boquist himself disclosed the memo Friday by distributing it to senators and having it posted on a legislative website.

Johnson said senators or their staff discovered documents tucked under their doors the morning of Nov. 15, a Thursday.

"In the security camera images, one can discern that the top page of the documents being held by you matches a page of the documents delivered to the offices," Johnson wrote.

Boquist last month acknowledged his conduct in an email to Travis Hampton, Oregon State Police superintendent. Boquist was try-

ing to determine how State Police accessed the Capitol's surveillance video about the delivery.

In his email, Boquist said he delivered the documents to offices on three floors at the Capitol between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

He said he was distributing documents about an incoming senator "as a reminder" to other senators. He said the material included "biographical data, online data and quotes of a candidate who is now a senator elect."

Boquist apparently was referring to Jeff Golden of Ashland, a Democrat who will take office next month as a senator.

Golden told the Oregon Capital Bureau that the materials other senators received referenced things he had said and done in the 1970s.

State lawmakers revisit worker protections for off duty pot use

SALEM (AP) — Oregon lawmakers will consider making it illegal for businesses to fire employees who flunk drug tests for using marijuana off the clock, reviving a workers' rights campaign that failed in the statehouse last year.

The Statesman Journal reports that a proposed bill would also change state law to protect job seekers who use substances like pot that are legal here.

The proposal reflects a debate over whether Oregon workers should be forced to abstain from marijuana use — which is allowed under state law but remains federally illegal — for fear of getting fired or losing an employment offer.

Senate Bill 301, which represented a previous attempt to loosen employment restrictions, failed in 2017. That bill generally dealt with discrimination against medical marijuana cardholders who tested positive for the cannabis.

The latest proposal has come before the Senate Interim Committee on Judiciary, chaired by Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene. Prozanski said Monday that the concept was a redrafted form of SB 301.

"We'll definitely have some discussions" on the proposal, he said.

The proposed bill wouldn't allow employees to use pot if their collective bargaining agreements pro-

hibit partaking while off-duty, or if there is a "bona fide occupational qualification" associated with their job. It also does not permit working under the influence.

SB 301 included exceptions for labor agreements, workers doing their jobs while impaired and contracts between employers and federal officials that require employers to have "a drug-free workplace" to receive federal dollars.

"There are a lot of questions employers have when it comes to establishing workplace rules, particularly when it comes to cannabis," said Beau Whitney, a senior economist with Washington, D.C.-based cannabis think tank New Frontier Data.

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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