

Oregon Senate President Courtney takes 10-day medical leave

By Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Senate President Peter Courtney is taking a 10-day medical leave at the recommendation of his doctors.

His spokeswoman, Carol McAlice Currie, said Courtney skipped Monday's floor session and wasn't in the Capitol on Tuesday.

Currie said Courtney's doctors have been after him to take some time and rest for a couple weeks now. She said his issues include a "flare up" of his Graves' disease — an autoimmune disorder that impacts the thyroid gland.

Currie didn't go into further detail, but said there should be no major concern, and the issue isn't expected to result in more absences. He was not hospitalized, his staff said.

A flu-like illness has spread through the Capitol recently, sickening some legislators and staffers. However, Courtney's condition is not related, according to Currie.

"We knew Peter was under the weather, but we didn't know what was the cause," Currie said.

Courtney, 75, battled an eye disease during the 2014

session that caused inflammation and redness. The Senate President's office suggested his current illness may be related, as Courtney has experienced similar symptoms.

Courtney is expected back March 18, according to Currie. He remains Senate president in his absence, with Senate President Pro Tempore Laurie Monnes Anderson filling in as presiding officer while he is away.

Mannes Anderson, a Democrat from Gresham, is a retired public health nurse who was elected to the Senate in 2004 after two terms in the House of Representatives.

Currie said Courtney will still sign off on bills moving through the Senate, and his staff will keep him apprised of goings on, however, the goal is to allow him to rest as much as possible. Currie said his absence wouldn't slow the legislative progress.

Currie said Courtney wouldn't attend the state funeral for Secretary of State Dennis Richardson on Wednesday.

Courtney has missed time due to health before.



Courtney

His staff pointed to 2003, when his appendix burst. He rallied, and shortly after was elected as Senate President for the first time.

Courtney, a Democrat, was elected to the Legislature in 1980, representing Salem in the House after serving on the Salem City Council.

Courtney is known for his rhetorical flair and a professed desire to conduct business in a bipartisan fashion. When the Salem lawmaker rose to Senate President in 2003, the 30-member chamber was split equally between Democrats and Republicans.

Public scrutiny of the longtime Senate president has dialed up in recent months in the wake of the state Bureau of Labor and Industry investigation into how he and other elected leaders and legislative staff handled allegations of sexual harassment at the Capitol.

The Senate president's office denied that Courtney's leave is related, emphasizing that he is following the advice of his doctors by staying away from work for the time being.

Merkley opts to stay out of White House race

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon announced Tuesday he has decided after months of consideration not to enter the increasingly crowded race for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

Merkley said in an interview that he decided he would be more effective in championing issues by running for his third term in the Senate instead of being a presidential candidate.

The large field of Democratic contenders for the White House was not a major factor in his decision, nor was an Oregon law that prevents him from being on the ballot for more than one elected office in any given year, Merkley said.

"I've never shied from a fight, and there's nothing about the field that would make me reluctant to be there," Merkley told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Monday night.

Merkley amped up his presence on the national stage by vocally opposing the Trump administration's immigration crackdown that has seen families separated and children put in detention facilities. But Priscilla Southwell, a University of Oregon political science professor, said that while Merkley has made a name for himself in Oregon and some other parts of the country, he is not well-known nationally, and the field of contenders is large.



AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File

In this Jan. 24, 2019, file photo, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., speaks during the U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in Washington.

"I think it was a very wise choice," Southwell said.

Merkley said he aims to fight anti-democracy moves including voter suppression, gerrymandering and dark money. He said he also wants to focus on helping families by improving health care, education and access to living-wage jobs and on stemming climate change.

"These are the things we feel like we have to take on, and we have to take them on boldly and aggressively," Merkley said.

He is not endorsing any candidate yet but said he is impressed by many of those Democrats who have already declared their candidacy or intention to run.

"If you're running, you've got to present a credible and determined vision on how you'll take on these problems," he advised the growing field.

In just the past few days, former Colorado Gov. John

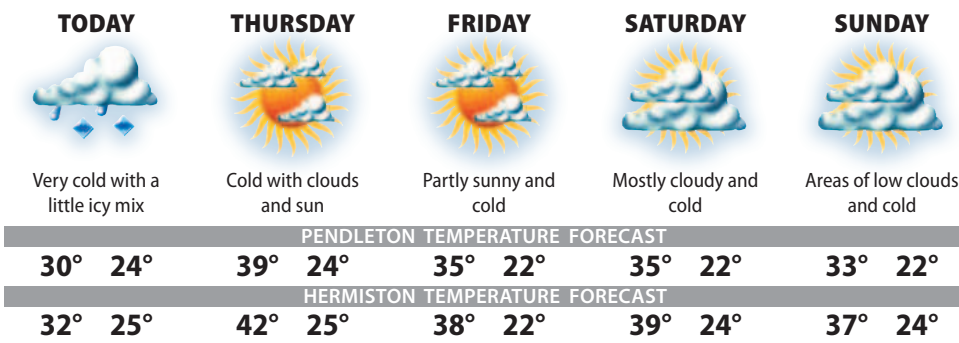
Hickenlooper and current Washington Gov. Jay Inslee launched their presidential bids, and 2016 presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and former Attorney General Eric Holder said they're not running.

Merkley expressed guarded optimism that Democrats might regain control of the Senate in 2020, girded by opposition to President Donald Trump.

If the House were to impeach Trump, the Senate would act as jury in a trial overseen by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and Merkley would have a seat in the juror box, something he indicated he anticipates happening.

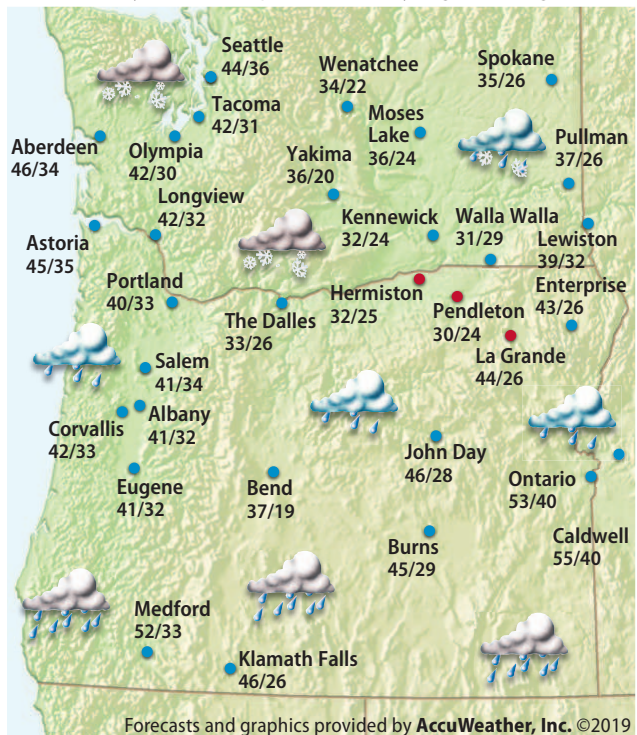
"The House has the responsibility of taking the first step," Merkley said. "As a future juror, let me just withhold my thoughts until the House has acted, and I have a responsibility to play that role in the Senate."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



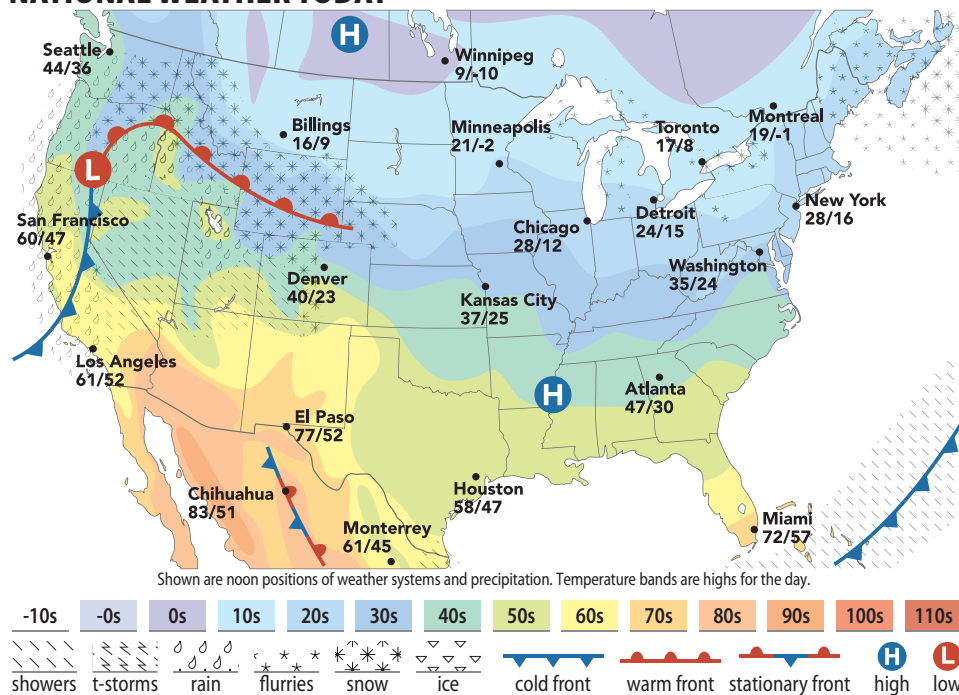
ALMANAC

| PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest. | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------|
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW | |
| Yesterday | 22° | 1° | |
| Normals | 52° | 33° | |
| Records | 74° (1972) | 1° (2019) | |
| PRECIPITATION | | | |
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00" | | |
| Month to date | Trace | | |
| Normal month to date | 0.17" | | |
| Year to date | 4.85" | | |
| Last year to date | 2.82" | | |
| Normal year to date | 2.68" | | |
| HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest. | | | |
| TEMP. | HIGH | LOW | |
| Yesterday | 23° | 0° | |
| Normals | 54° | 32° | |
| Records | 70° (1987) | 0° (2019) | |
| PRECIPITATION | | | |
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00" | | |
| Month to date | 0.00" | | |
| Normal month to date | 0.17" | | |
| Year to date | 3.39" | | |
| Last year to date | 1.75" | | |
| Normal year to date | 2.41" | | |
| WINDS (in mph) | | | |
| Boardman | NNW 4-8 | Thu. SW 6-12 | |
| Pendleton | NNW 4-8 | WSW 6-12 | |
| SUN AND MOON | | | |
| Sunrise today | 6:25 a.m. | | |
| Sunset tonight | 5:48 p.m. | | |
| Moonrise today | 6:50 a.m. | | |
| Moonset today | 5:59 p.m. | | |
| New First Full Last | | | |
| Mar 6 | Mar 14 | Mar 20 | Mar 27 |

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 88° in Tamiami, Fla. Low -35° in Clark, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Oregon bill would effectively ban death penalty

SALEM (AP) — A proposed bill in Oregon would effectively ban capital punishment in the state by limiting it to terrorism-related killings.

House Bill 3268 would also grant new sentencing trials to all people currently on death row.

Lawmakers cannot introduce an outright ban on capital punishment without sending the measure to the ballot box.

Voters approved adding the death penalty to the Oregon state constitution in 1984.

Democratic Gov. Kate Brown extended a 2011 moratorium on using the death penalty.

The state Department of Corrections says there were 30 people on death row as of Jan. 1, 2019. The last execution was in 1997.

Forgery operation produced over 10,000 fake documents

SALEM (AP) — A man from primarily Woodburn has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to produce false documents after agents found a document-forging lab in his apartment that had allegedly produced over 10,000 fake Social Security cards, driver's licenses and immigration-related documents.

BRIEFLY

Federal prosecutors say Miguel Merceias-Lopez, 24, was part of a criminal conspiracy based in Oaxaca, Mexico.

The U.S. attorney's office in Oregon said Merceias-Lopez pleaded guilty on Tuesday to one count each of conspiracy to produce false identification documents and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Clackamas County Interagency Task Force members arrested Merceias-Lopez on September 21, 2017, in a parking lot in Woodburn. More than 2.2 pounds of methamphetamine was allegedly found on him.

Snowstorm costs to surpass Bend's snow plow budget

BEND (AP) — A monster snowstorm that pummeled the central Oregon city of Bend last week will likely push the city's snow removal costs way past the budgeted amount.

The Bulletin reports Tuesday that bills from private snow removal contractors are expected to total up to \$300,000 and the city budgeted for \$250,000 for snow contractors.

More than 25 inches of snow fell over three days last week, bringing total February snowfall to a record-breaking 30 inches. The previous monthly record was just over 23 inches in February 1917.

The city spent four times

its budget on snow removal contractors in the winter of 2016-17 when a series of snow storms dumped more than 60 inches in the area.

But last year's weather was relatively tame and snow plows sat mostly idle.

Refuge occupier accused of violating supervised release

PORTLAND (AP) — An Oregon refuge occupier was briefly back in custody and appeared before a federal magistrate judge on an accusation of violating the conditions of his supervised release.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports Jason Patrick was sentenced in February 2017 to one year and nine months in prison in the armed occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. A jury convicted Patrick of conspiracy to impede federal workers through intimidation, threat or violence, a felony. A judge convicted him of trespass, tampering with vehicles and equipment and destruction or removal of property, all misdemeanors.

At the time of his sentence, he had already served 16 months. He was released from federal prison March 30. Most recently, he has been living in a trailer in Baker City.

Court-appointed lawyer Thomas Price said Monday that Patrick denies the allegations.

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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