

# Climate: GOP Senate strike in Oregon enters 5th day

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The legislation would dramatically reduce greenhouse gases in Oregon by 2050 by capping carbon emissions, and then requiring businesses to buy or trade for an ever-dwindling pool of pollution "allowances."

Democrats say the program, which would be the second of its kind after California, is critical to make Oregon a leader in the fight against climate change and will ultimately create jobs and transform the state's economy. Opponents, including the struggling logging industry, say it will kill jobs, raise the cost of fuel and gut small businesses in rural parts of the state.

The walkout attracted national attention after a tumultuous weekend that began with Senate President Peter Courtney ordering the Capitol closed because of a "possible militia threat" from far-right groups, who threatened to join a peaceful protest organized by local Republicans. One of those groups, the Oregon Three Percenters, joined an armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016.

The threat, however, never materialized and fewer than 100 people showed up.

Democrats have an 18 to 11 majority, but need 20 members to conduct business under state law.

Negotiations remain between Senate Republican leaders and the Senate president, the governor's office confirmed. Sen. Herman Baertschiger, the minority leader, said in a statement that he has remained in contact with Senate leadership, but that "no deal with the Democrats has been made."

The discussion has quickly morphed into something far beyond a discussion on climate change.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, the lawmaker behind the climate bill, said Republicans have used language that's "irresponsible and dangerous." He referenced comments from Sen. Brian Boquist, who threatened state police to "send bachelors and come heavily armed" when troopers come to bring him back to the Oregon Capitol. Boquist's comments caught the attention of the Oregon Three Percenters, who offered safe passage to senators on the run over social media.

"I'm really worried that this particular bill is being used to stir up the worst sentiments, the most dangerous sentiments we can imagine," said Dembrow, adding that he hopes Republicans "can find a way to reject this path that Sen. Boquist has taken them on and come back to do the people's business."

Boquist's comments came under heavy media scrutiny and drew a rare rebuke from both the Senate president and Speaker of the House, who are both Democrats. No Republican senator has publicly spoken out against Boquist's comments or the threat of violence over the weekend.

The Oregon GOP, responding to the state-house closure, sarcastically tweeted a picture of peaceful protesters and joked that the rally-goers were a "heavily armed militia" laying siege upon the Capitol while "Senate Democrats cower in fear."

The tweet was widely spread and misinterpreted, even garnering a response from national politicians including U.S. Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat from New York, who offered to help Republicans "find a therapist."

# Wildhorse: Arcade, food court, 24-lane bowling alley are coming

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the Pendleton area and one of the biggest in Umatilla County.

But the expansion's original vision was even more ambitious.

When Wildhorse announced its \$85 million expansion in 2017, it included a four-screen addition to the cineplex, a parking garage, an outdoor arena, and a 32-lane bowling alley.

But project setbacks forced Wildhorse to either shrink the scope of some features or nix them entirely.

Wildhorse announced in

December that it was scaling down the project to keep it within the budget as the price of steel surged.

Additionally, Lydig reported that a widespread shortage of contractors made them more expensive due to their high demand.

But even as Wildhorse has dealt with some obstacles, its expansion continues in other ways.

Already in the midst of renovating its own golf course, the CTUIR announced in May that it had purchased the Pendleton Country Club course. Located south of Pendleton,

the course will be operated by Wildhorse staff.

With construction commencing in the area around the cineplex, George said the bowling alley, movie theater improvements, arcade, and entertainment center have an estimated completion date of August or September 2020.

With work starting relatively late in construction season, George is hopeful that they will have the contractors they need to get the project done.

The expected completion of the hotel addition has been pushed out to 2021.

# Suspensions: Federal judge dismisses lawsuit from locals

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state has suspended the licenses for as many as 10 percent of Oregonians, or more than 300,000 people."

About 13 percent of the state's population — more than 536,000 people — live below the poverty line, the law center asserted, and the suspensions land the hardest on those without the ability to pay, yet the DMV does not take that into account when yanking driving privileges. That amounts to violating constitutional rights due to prices and equal protection, according to the complaint.

"The DMV should refrain from suspending the driver's licenses of low-income individuals who cannot afford to pay their traffic debt," the pleading asserted, and "implement an ability-to-pay determination process that comports with due process and equal protection prior to suspending driver licenses for failure to pay traffic debt, and provide subsequent opportunities to lift suspensions because of indigence."

The lawsuit named key transportation officials as defendants: Matthew Garrett, director of the Oregon Department of Transportation; Tammy Baney, chair of the Oregon Transportation Commission; Sean O'Hollaren, Bob Van Brocklin and Martin Callery, all members of the transportation commission; and Tom McClellan, administrator of Driver and Motor Vehicles Division, which is under ODOT's roof.

Ganuelas in a declaration to the court stated her driv-

ing trouble started in 2012 when she was not able to pay the Pendleton Municipal Court \$150 for failure to display plates. The court notified the DMV, which suspended her license.

She received several citations for driving while suspended and in July 2018 lost her bartending job, where she earned about \$400 a week in wages and tips, because of transportation difficulties. The loss of her driving privileges makes it hard to find new work and affects her daughter, who has been unable to participate in youth sports because of unreliable transportation.

Ganuelas stated she owes more than \$750 to three courts, according to the statement, but she cannot afford to pay the debts, and no one at the DMV asked about her ability to pay fines.

Heath in her declaration stated she lost her license in 1995 after missing court for an out-of-state ticket. That led to suspensions for failure to pay fines. That debt has expired, but she told the court she lives on a fixed income and cannot pay the \$149 fee to reinstate her license.

The *East Oregonian* was not able to contact Ganuelas or Heath, and a lawyer for the Oregon Law Center did not return a call before deadline.

The Oregon Law Center also asked the federal court for an injunction to compel the state to remove the suspensions on the plaintiffs' driver's licenses for nonpayment of traffic debt and waive reinstatement and issuance fees. The center also asked the court to

ensure Oregon does not suspend the plaintiffs' licenses again for failure to pay traffic debt "unless and until plaintiffs have had the opportunity to demonstrate their inability to pay ... through a procedure that comports with due process."

United States District Judge Marco A. Hernandez in a December ruling denied the injunction in a 63-page ruling, concluding: "I recognize that Plaintiffs' economic situations are marginal and the loss of their driver's licenses for their inability to pay their traffic debt burdens their lives with little chance that the state will actually collect full payment. Nonetheless, their predicaments, as desperate as they may be, do not raise constitutional claims."

The state in March asked the judge to dismiss the case in a 42-page motion, arguing among other points the pleading failed to state a claim. That is, while the allegations are true, they do not establish a cause for legal action.

Hernandez on May 16 sided with the state and dismissed the case once and for all. He cited in part the injunction ruling and stated Oregon provides traffic debtors ways to address the debt.

"Given the nature of the right at issue," the judge concluded, "the low risk of erroneous deprivation, and the strong interest in enforcing traffic fines, the Oregon statutes comport with procedural due process requirements."

The Oregon Law Center on June 13 filed a notice of appeal.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Intern Anya Nelson places a metal band on the leg of a juvenile burrowing owl Wednesday outside of Hermiston.

# Hoot: Expert makes annual trek to Depot

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back inside.

Johnson broke apart a pellet to see what the owls were eating and saw evidence of darkling beetles and other insects. Usually this time of year, they would be eating grasshoppers, but the snow pushed everything back and those insects are slow in arriving this year. That's one reason 30 percent of the nests failed this season, he said, in the second worst year since the burrow program started.

Over the years, researchers and volunteers banded more than 1,600 owls and placed geolocators on many. Capturing the adults takes ingenuity. The females are lured into traps by the call of young birds on an MP3 player. The males are drawn into dirt-covered traps inserted at the entrance to their burrows.

"To attract males, we play the call of a pesky, underweight male. We appeal to their male pride," Nelson said. "They strut around a while and then go in."

Johnson was able to discover where the owls migrate in the winter. The results surprised him. The females, as expected, migrated south. The males, however, flew north to Eastern Washing-

ton. Johnson theorized that they want to stay close in order to return to the nesting area first to reclaim their burrows.

One experiment involved the pipe used to create a tunnel connecting the burrow entrance to the chamber. They outfitted some burrows with 4-inch pipe and others with 6-inch. He found the owls nested more in the four-inch burrows, but lost more babies.

"With the 4-inch pipe, predators could pick the chicks off easier," he said. "With 6-inch, the chicks run into the tunnel two abreast. With the 4-inch tunnels, little Joey on the end gets it."

He is in the midst of researching the birds' vocalizations.

In front of one of the burrows, Johnson picked up a spadefoot toad. The owls decorate burrow entrances with the skeletons and other artifacts, such as corn cobs, onion skins, clumps of grass, pieces of concrete, coyote scat, fabric and the occasional glove.

Johnson will return next year to the depot. In the meantime, he won't lack for things to do. After finishing up on Thursday in Oregon, he headed to Montana for an interview with National

Geographic. He is working on an upcoming Smithsonian exhibit on owls and he works on Global Owl Project conservation projects all over the world. He is away from his Washington, D.C., home about half the year.

At the depot, Johnson hopes to eventually work himself out of the burrow-making business. One day, he hopes, the badger population will recover and take over the job.

Wherever he is, Johnson will likely never lose his fascination with owls. As he drove between burrows at the depot on Wednesday, he spouted cool owl factoids with unceasing enthusiasm.

"The oldest owl we know of in the fossil record is 67.3 million years old," he said with a look of awe. "They were here at the time of the dinosaurs. The largest owl, extinct now, came from Cuba and was a little over a meter tall. The smallest is the elf owl in the desert southwest. It's the size of a sparrow."

Johnson shook his head in wonder. This creature never gets boring, he said. "Everything about them is so fascinating."

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**Excitement on Dorion Avenue!**

Member Stearns Home Loans opened their doors for this month's K5. Stop in to visit their new location at 33 SE Dorion!

Mark your calendar for our next one at El Roi Apparel July 11!




Raffle prizes, Ambassadors & friends at Stearns Home Loans on June 13th.

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Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting with Linsey Kellogg + Team on June 14th.

And one door down, our Ambassadors welcome Linsey Kellogg State Farm Insurance Agency to our membership network! Find them at 29 SE Dorion!

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**TUESDAY JULY 2 7:15A-8A**

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