

# Public employee union lands big wage increases in new contract

By **AUBREY WIEBER**  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — State employees got a win unlike anything they have seen since before the recession with the Legislature dedicating \$200 million to pay increases.

That money allowed Service Employees International Union Local 503 to negotiate a two-year contract with the state that gives a 10-15% automatic pay increase, a 3% cost-of-living-adjustment and a freeze on insurance premiums to 24,000 state employees. The contract was agreed upon Friday, but is still being drafted.

“This is the most significant we’ve seen the wages increase since 2007 — pre recession,” said SEIU 503 spokesman Ben Morris.

SEIU represents workers throughout state agencies, such as the Oregon Department of Transportation, State Parks and Department of Forestry.

Step increases, or guaranteed raises, had previously been frozen and cost-of-living increases were only 1.5%, Morris said.

Step increases were frozen from 2009-11, with a partial freeze in 2012. Also, in the last decade the average cost-of-living adjustment was 1.4%.

“I think the Legislature made a statement,” he said.

Morris said lobbying the Legislature was a session-long endeavor that included six “lobby days” where SEIU members came to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers. Then, the union negotiated with the Oregon Department of Administrative Services for two months.

Ten member representatives would meet with DAS every two weeks, and daily in the final couple weeks. The final details weren’t agreed upon until 2:30 a.m. Friday, Morris said.

The final step is ratification, where a majority of the 24,000 members have to approve the contract. That will take about two months.

“This will be a popular contract so I don’t expect we’ll have hiccups there,” Morris said.

It’s a bright spot for a public employee union that has faced challenges recently. About a year ago, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling said unions cannot demand dues from public employees. All members must opt in. The court case that led to the decision was backed by anti-union group the Freedom Foundation, which has continued to go after unions.

Aaron Withe, Freedom Foundation’s Oregon director, said the new contract is self-serving.

“SEIU and other government unions’ goal is to raise

taxes and bloat government,” Withe said, adding with that bloated government comes more government jobs and more money for unions.

With said he’s heard from members that claim they’d be better off without collective bargaining.

Many analyses, including from the Economic Policy Institute, has found workers in labor unions get paid better than those outside of unions.

Morris said despite that challenging environment, the union has remained strong. While the Freedom Foundation has sent out news releases claiming SEIU 503 lost members in droves, Morris said they have actually seen a 2.2% increase in membership over the past year.

“By and large, public employees are choosing to stick with their union, and it paid off,” he said.

Withe said he is “extremely skeptical” of that claim, saying it doesn’t match up with numbers he got from the state.

In addition to pay increases, the union secured a deal to allow employees to cash in up to 40 hours of vacation time per year, as long as the balance after is at least 60 hours.

The union also codified a previously informal agreement that allowed employees to telecommute if they could reasonably do so.



Capital Press Photo, File

Researchers have found that a combination of factors is responsible for bumblebee deaths.

## Study: Combination of factors causes bumblebee deaths

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

CORVALLIS — Pesticides may kill bees, but not all bee deaths are caused by pesticides.

That is the conclusion of a new study published July 10 by researchers at Oregon State University investigating bumblebee mortality beneath flowering linden trees.

The issue was thrust into the national spotlight in 2013, when 50,000 bees died at a Target parking lot in Wilsonville, after landscapers sprayed 55 trees with the pesticide dinotefuran to control aphids. Dinotefuran is one of a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids that are highly toxic to bees.

“It was really dramatic,” said Sujaya Rao, a professor of entomology and one of the study’s lead researchers. “They were literally falling dead in front of people’s eyes as they came to shop.”

While that incident — the largest single loss of native bees ever recorded — was undoubtedly due to the pesticide, Rao said it prompted OSU researchers to take a closer look at bumblebee health.

Rao has spent 17 years at OSU working on native bees in agricultural crops. She left in 2017 to become the department head for entomology at the University of Minnesota.

According to the study, the phenomenon of bee deaths around linden trees dates back to the 1970s in Europe and North America. Neonicotinoids were not introduced until the 1990s and are considered to be safer for farmworkers.

Rao said people are quick to blame pesticides for every bee death, but the study determined a rare combination of factors is also likely to blame. These include low temperatures, nectar volume and “tree loyalty” among certain bees that ultimately leads to starvation.

Linden trees are a popular choice for planting in cities and urban areas. Rao said they flower profusely, and provide lots of pollen and nectar for bees.

The problem is that some bees are drawn to the same trees over and over again, ignoring other flowering plants nearby and failing to get enough nutrition.

“When you have something that attractive to bees,

lots of bees come to it and everybody is foraging,” Rao said. “It’s like a whole bunch of us trying to drink punch from a bowl. There won’t be enough to go around.”

That is especially troublesome during cool Northwest mornings, when temperatures drop below 86 degrees Fahrenheit. When ambient temperature is low, bees need more energy in their thorax to fly. If they are already experiencing an energy deficit, they might simply fall to the ground.

“They keep trying to fly, and they’re just not able to do that,” Rao said. “When they cannot fly, they cannot get to food. They cannot get to the nest, so they just die. It’s very sad.”

Not every linden tree causes bee mortality, and not every bee that forages in lindens dies, Rao said. Lindens are still great trees, she added, and cities should not stop planting them.

But under the right conditions, Rao said it is possible for some bees to die around lindens, even in the absence of pesticides.

“It does happen in western Oregon year after year after year,” she said. “You cannot control the temperature.”

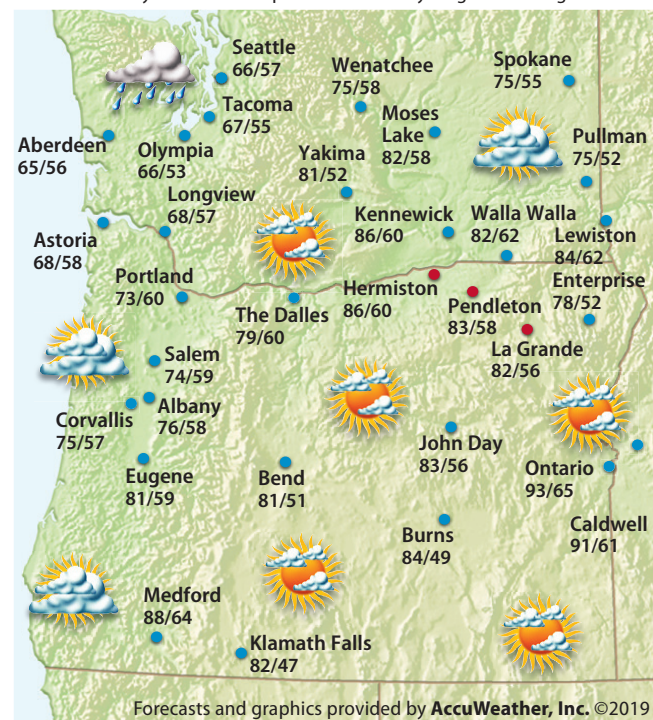
### Forecast for Pendleton Area

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TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Periods of clouds and sunshine	Mostly sunny; breezy, pleasant	Mostly sunny and nice	Pleasant with plenty of sunshine	Sunshine
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
83° 58°	81° 51°	79° 50°	86° 55°	93° 58°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
86° 60°	85° 53°	84° 50°	90° 54°	98° 62°

### 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 84° 60°  
 Normals 89° 59°  
 Records 111° (1911) 39° (1904)

**PRECIPITATION**  
 24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace  
 Month to date 0.02"  
 Normal month to date 0.16"  
 Year to date 9.59"  
 Last year to date 6.49"  
 Normal year to date 7.73"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.  
**TEMP.** HIGH LOW  
 Yesterday 86° 60°  
 Normals 89° 59°  
 Records 108° (2014) 42° (2000)

**PRECIPITATION**  
 24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace  
 Month to date Trace  
 Normal month to date 0.11"  
 Year to date 4.55"  
 Last year to date 5.10"  
 Normal year to date 5.81"

**WINDS** (in mph)  
 Today Thu.  
**Boardman** WSW 10-20 WSW 10-20  
**Pendleton** W 8-16 W 10-20

**SUN AND MOON**  
 Sunrise today 5:22 a.m.  
 Sunset tonight 8:40 p.m.  
 Moonrise today 9:30 p.m.  
 Moonset today 5:59 a.m.

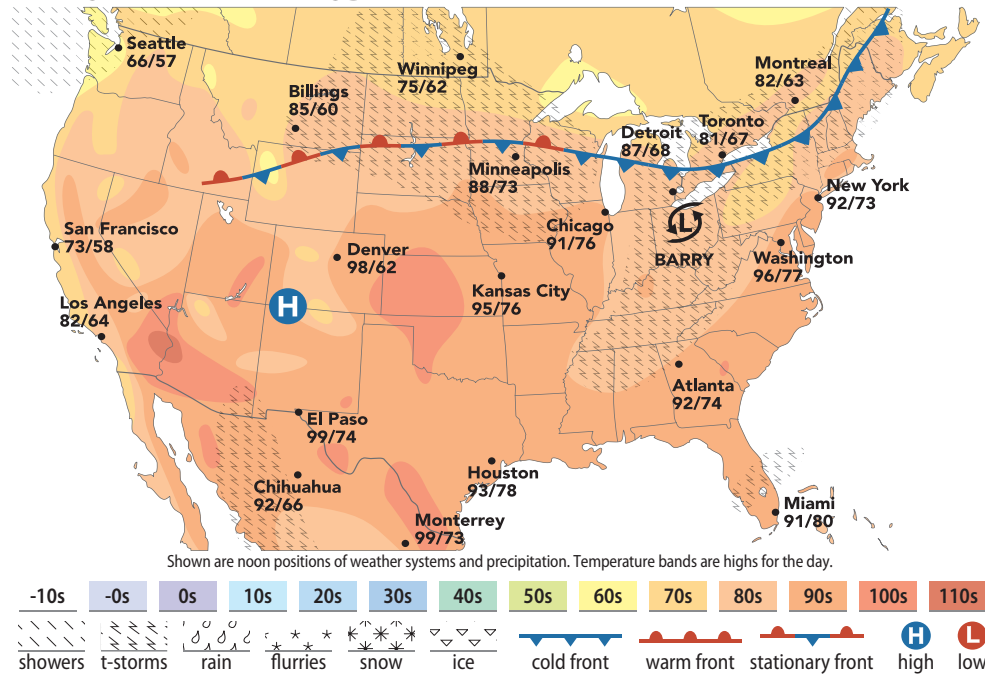


### NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 115° in Needles, Calif. Low 37° in Truckee, Calif.

### NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



### BRIEFLY

#### Portland sued over Superfund site cleanup efforts

PORTLAND (AP) — The city of Portland is being sued over its plan to use up to \$12 million from a surcharge on customers’ sewer bills to help pay to plan the Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports it’s the second lawsuit challenging the use of funds collected by the city’s sewer utility, the Bureau of Environmental Services, to pay for the city’s share of the Superfund work.

Attorney John DiLorenzo and his clients contend that despite rulings in a previous lawsuit, the city has continued to use restricted sewer money as a piggybank for projects that should be paid for by unrestricted tax dollars in the city’s general funds. “They’re using the sewer fund as a bank,” DiLorenzo said.

City leaders and environmentalists say the sewer utility’s spending on the Portland Harbor project was clearly upheld by a judge in 2017 — and the new lawsuit is the latest in a series of tactics to delay the federally mandated cleanup of the river.

“We’re operating squarely within the ruling that the court has already given,” said Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the Bureau of Environmental Services. “Since this lawsuit essentially raises the same issues, we believe it’s frivolous.”

The cleanup is expected to take up to 13 years and cost approximately \$1 billion, and the city is one among many parties legally liable for the pollution.

#### Patient accused of killing patient at mental health center

PORTLAND (AP) — A man was arrested after authorities say he fatally choked a woman at a Southeast Portland mental health treatment facility in May while they both were patients.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports Roger J. Jones was arrested Friday. Court documents say that surveillance video shows Jones twice go into the room of Huyen Cao on May 17, where he at some point strangled her off camera.

A probable cause affidavit says he goes into her room around 3:40 a.m., stays for 17 minutes, leaves and returns briefly about 10 minutes later.

Cao was later found unresponsive in her bed by employees at the Cameron Care Center and pronounced dead.

Cameron Care officials didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment while a worker who answered the phone there said the company declines comment on the killing.

It wasn’t immediately known if Jones has a lawyer.

**CLARIFICATION:** The 1A story “Milton-Freewater Ambulance Service Area Health District proposes formation of ambulance district,” from July 11, misstated the annual funding of the district. Currently, Milton-Freewater EMS receives \$137,700 in annual funding from the ambulance district. With 1,045 calls last year, this equals \$131.77 per response rather than the previously reported \$883.

**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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