

Maryland leader takes on troubled Oregon program

State’s child welfare program is getting a new director

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Adopted out of foster care as a baby, Rebecca Jones Gaston will now oversee the welfare of thousands of Oregon kids in similar situations.

Jones Gaston was born in Minnesota and raised in Iowa. After an East Coast education and more than two decades of work in social services, she will take the helm of the embattled child welfare program of the Oregon Department of Human Services.

The agency has intensely criticized in audits and legislative hearings for failing to adequately care for some of Oregon’s most vulnerable kids.

The child welfare program has been run by four directors since 2016.

Marilyn Jones, the most recent director, retired in June after the state was the target of a class-action lawsuit over its treatment of

kids with complex needs and was caught sending children to facilities in other states with little oversight.

Gov. Kate Brown earlier this year declared a crisis in foster care and convened a board of top-level state executives and other experts to meet behind closed doors to find a fix, bringing on high-priced consultants to help.

Jones Gaston, who is currently the executive director of the Social Services Administration for the Maryland Department of Human Services, will begin her Oregon post Nov. 4.

She has worked for the state of Maryland since 2016, serving as deputy executive director before rising to executive director of the Social Services Administration. Before that, she worked in a division of Casey Family Programs that helped states and counties improve child services.

In an interview Wednesday, she said she intends to tackle her new post with a sense of urgency.

“Everything that we do absolutely impacts children



Capital Bureau Photo/Claire Withycombe

Oregon’s child welfare program is getting a new director, charged with managing the care of 7,000 children in foster settings. Rebecca Jones Gaston said she brings a sense of urgency to her new job.

and families on a day-to-day basis, and we need to keep that in mind, because it is life-impacting,” Jones Gaston said. “And it is our responsibility to make sure that we are moving forward thoughtfully, but also, really intentionally paying attention to the need for change to happen in ways that

don’t drag on and on and on, or this change of personnel having an impact on being able to have outcomes improve.”

About 7,000 kids are in the state’s care on any given day.

In Maryland, Jones Gaston led an effort to return to Maryland kids sent to other

states for care. The number of Maryland kids placed out of state in three and a half years dropped from 68 to 18.

Jones Gaston said that she worked with other government agencies and providers to find what kids needed, figured out the gaps in services and found ways to provide services locally.

She arranged for special emergency spending and worked within the agency to put up a “speed bump” — an extra layer of review — before sending children out of state.

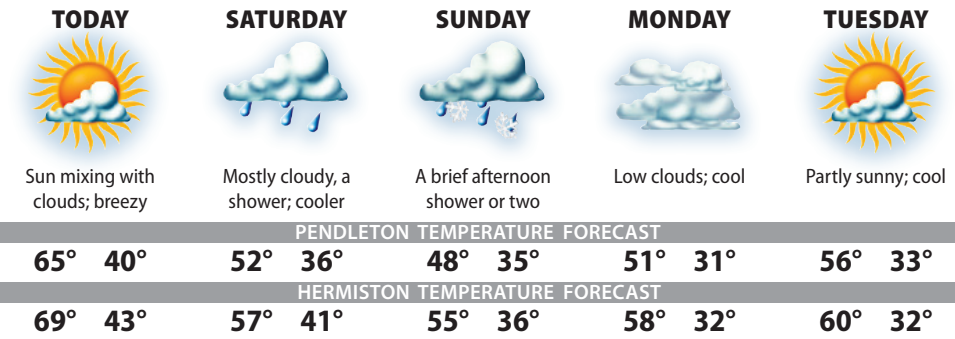
In late August, Jones Gaston visited Oregon, meeting with people involved in the foster care system, ranging from legislators to foster youth, as well as Brown.

In a statement, a spokesman for Brown said the governor is “impressed with Rebecca’s vision and leadership experience in the child welfare arena, and is pleased that she will bring those experiences to Oregon with the commitment of improving outcomes for our children and families.”

Asked what the biggest challenge might be, Jones Gaston pointed to the “interconnected” issues that the state has been grappling with lately, including the lawsuit, the out-of-state placements and the need for more places in Oregon for kids and families to get help.

“I think that really is where the top priority needs to be focused on — how to remedy that, but in conjunction with building and transforming the system itself,” Jones Gaston said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

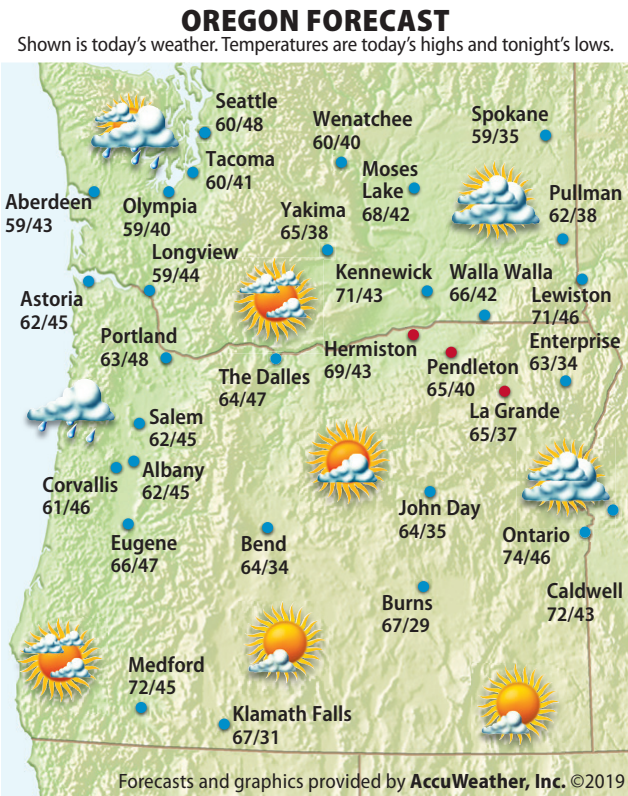


MONDAY

Low clouds; cool

TUESDAY

Partly sunny; cool



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	71°	45°
Normals	73°	46°
Records	94° (1899)	24° (1908)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.11"
Normal month to date	0.46"
Year to date	10.85"
Last year to date	6.52"
Normal year to date	8.84"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	75°	53°
Normals	75°	44°
Records	98° (1952)	32° (2000)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.15"
Normal month to date	0.37"
Year to date	4.76"
Last year to date	5.15"
Normal year to date	6.49"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sat.
Boardman	WSW 10-20	N 7-14
Pendleton	W 10-20	W 6-12

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:48 a.m.
Sunset tonight	6:44 p.m.
Moonrise today	5:06 a.m.
Moonset today	6:42 p.m.

New

First

Full

Last

Sep 28

Oct 5

Oct 13

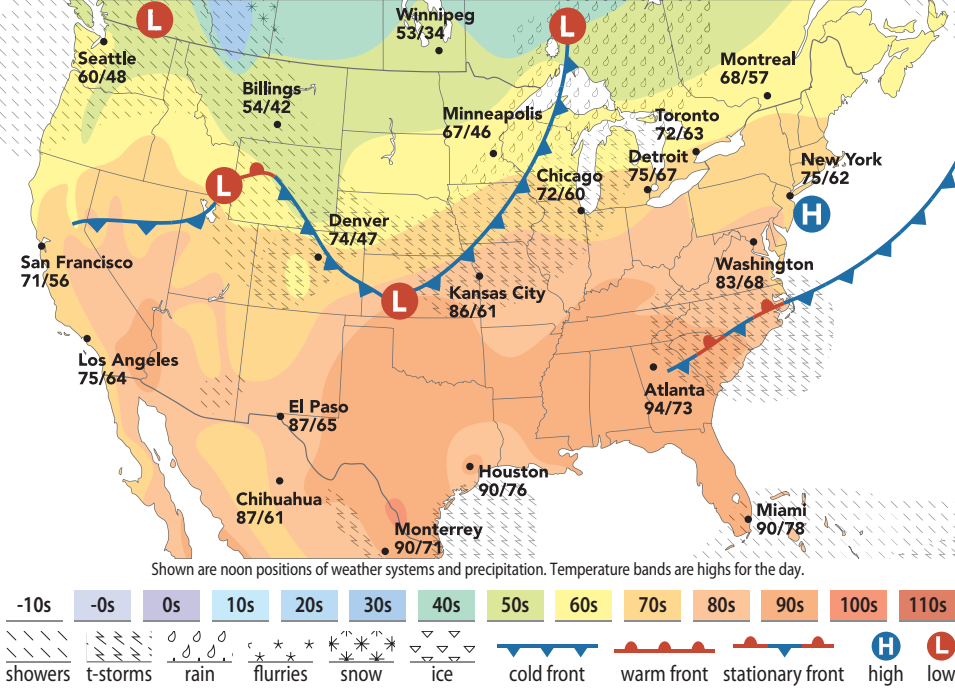
Oct 21

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 102° in Macon, Ga. Low 24° in Stanley, Idaho

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Economists: Most state rent increases capped at 9.9% in 2020

Associated Press

PORTLAND — State economists announced Wednesday that rent increases will be capped at 9.9% through 2020, the first full year Oregon’s new rent control law will be in effect.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported the Oregon Legislature this year passed Senate Bill 608, which imposed the nation’s first statewide rent control policy.

The law caps rent increases at 7% plus the rate of inflation for the urban West. For 2019, that number came to 10.3%.

Not all rentals are subject

to the policy. The rent cap doesn’t apply to buildings that are less than 15 years old, which is an attempt to avoid a damper on housing construction — nor to government-subsidized rents. Landlords may raise rent without any cap if tenants leave of their own accord.

Typical rents across Oregon are rising at a far slower rate than what’s allowed under the cap.

But lawmakers who supported the policy said it would avert the biggest rent hikes that functioned as de facto evictions. Such increases, in which rents sometimes doubled or more,

grabbed headlines in recent years, frequently after apartment buildings were sold to a new owner.

The new law also requires most landlords to cite a cause, such as failure to pay rent or other lease violation, when evicting renters after the first year of tenancy.

Some “landlord-based” for-cause evictions are allowed, including the landlord moving in or a major renovation. In those cases, landlords are required to provide 90 days’ notice and pay one month’s rent to the tenant, though landlords with four or fewer units would be exempt from the payment.

Man gets 14 years for attempted murder of deputy

SALEM — A man who was convicted of trying to kill a Marion County deputy during a botched jailbreak was sentenced to nearly 14 years in prison.

The Statesman Journal reported 49-year-old Bradley Monical was convicted after a weeklong trial in which he represented himself. A jury convicted Monical Friday of attempted aggravated murder, second-degree assault, escape, assault of a public safety officer and strangulation.

While he was awaiting trial in Marion County on robbery and attempted murder charges, Monical and another inmate attacked Deputy Stacy Headrick during an early-morning escape attempt in November 2016.

Court records say they surprise-attacked Headrick and choked her while trying to grab her keys and radio.

Headrick was seriously injured during the attack and hospitalized.

Monical insisted he was not planning to kill Headrick.

Cops probe if spouse-killing was murder or self-defense

HILLSBORO — Authorities say a 62-year-old man has been identified as the husband killed by his wife Monday during an argument in a Bethany-area home.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported an investigation continues into the shooting of Philip L. Cloud to determine if it was an act of murder or self-defense.

Washington County Deputy Brian van Kleef says no arrests had been made as of Wednesday.

BRIEFLY

Van Kleef says the couple was estranged. The wife lived on a farm property on Northwest Germantown Road where the shooting occurred, and the husband lived in Hillsboro.

Oregon court records show Philip Cloud filed for divorce from Tracy Cloud in June.

Van Kleef says the wife called 911 Monday afternoon and reported she shot her husband. He died at the scene.

Van Kleef said Tracy Cloud reported that Philip Cloud pulled a handgun on her before she drew her handgun and shot him.

Eugene man acquitted in baby’s death

EUGENE — A Eugene man has been acquitted on charges alleging he caused the death of a baby in 2012.

The Register-Guard reported a Lane County Circuit Court jury reached a not guilty verdict Wednesday in the case against 34-year-old Tyler James Doyle. The jury acquitted Doyle of the first-degree manslaughter charge filed against him last year.

The jury also found Doyle not guilty on charges of second-degree manslaughter and criminal negligent homicide.

Doyle was arrested in October 2018, accused of causing the death of 4-month-old Kelsyn James Kamakani Oetken, “under circumstances manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life,” according to a grand jury indictment filed at the time.

Eugene police investigated the case as a homicide, saying the infant was found to have suffered “significant brain trauma” consistent with having been violently shaken.

— Associated Press

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