

Highway 30 could get a new name honoring Oregon veterans

By KEVIN HARDEN
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's long stretch of U.S. Highway 30, from Astoria to the Idaho border, could become the Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway.

Senate Bill 790, introduced on Feb. 24 by Sen. Tim Knopp, a Bend Republican, would rename Oregon's 477-mile section of the national highway. On Wednesday, March 3, the bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dick Tobiason of the nonprofit Bend Heroes Foundation is the driving force behind SB 790. Tobiason, who served two tours during the Vietnam War as an Army aviator, and his one-man nonprofit operation led efforts on past legislation to rename eight Oregon highways to honor veterans. His legislative success rate is 100%.

"I've never lost a vote in 12 years doing these highways," Tobiason said.

It's simple math, he said. The Bend Heroes Foundation raises all the money needed to create 4-by-8 foot signs to be posted along the highway with the veterans designation (probably more than \$10,000 for Highway 30). It pays Oregon's Department of Transportation to install them. Not a dime of taxpayer funds goes into the effort.

"Why would the Legislature disapprove of this?" Tobiason asked. "It doesn't cost them a cent."

There are nearly 100 signs honoring veterans installed on eight Oregon highways stretching more than 3,000



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

An American flag and POW/MIA flag fly from the handles of William Koston's walker as he strolls along U.S. Highway 30 near Roy Raley Park in Pendleton on Friday, March 5, 2021. Koston, who served with the 101st Airborne Division in Germany, said he flies the flags to remember those who have yet to make it home. A proposal introduced on Feb. 24 by Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, would rename the Oregon stretch of Highway 30 as the Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway.

miles across the state. Each designated highway has between 10 and 18 signs, he said. That means drivers could see one veterans highway honor sign every 65 miles.

U.S. Highway 30 extends 3,073 miles to Boston on the East Coast. It is the only major highway in Oregon not designated to honor veterans. It crosses 11 states and is the nation's third longest coast-to-coast highway.

Oregon's section of the highway that winds along the Columbia River

from the Astoria-Megler Bridge through Scappoose and Portland before heading east as part of Interstate 84, is the beginning of Tobiason's plans for the road. He's working with veterans groups and lawmakers in 10 other states to get the same designation all the way to Boston.

Tobiason's Bend Heroes Foundation has also asked Congress to designate the 3,365-mile U.S. Highway 20, which begins at Newport on the Oregon Coast and heads east

to Boston, the National Medal of Honor Highway. Oregon's section of Highway 20 is already known as the Medal of Honor Highway.

SB 790 is also kind of an ending for Tobiason. He has proposed similar bills since 2008 and testified 14 times in favor of legislation. When he's finished with the U.S. Highway 30 project, just about every major highway in the state will honor veterans or service men and women missing in action.

Between World War I (1914) and wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf (1990 and 2003), 6,000 Oregon soldiers, sailors (including Coast Guard), Marines, merchant seamen and airmen were killed. During that same time, about 15,000 Oregonians were wounded in combat and nearly 1,000 were prisoners. About 1,000 Oregonians remain missing in action from all of the conflicts.

Oregon highways Tobiason and the foundation have designated include:

- U.S. Highway 395, from California to Washington, is the World War I Veterans Memorial Highway.
- Interstate 5, from California to Washington, is known as the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway and the Purple Heart Trail.
- A section of I-5 from Albany to Salem is the Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway.
- U.S. Highway 101, from Washington to California, is the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.
- A section of U.S. Highway 26, from the Highway 101 intersection to Idaho, is the POW/MIA Memorial Highway.

Tobiason is already planning his Eastern Oregon trip later this year when U.S. Highway 30 is officially designated the Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway. He's been to nearly every highway sign dedication ceremony, racking up more than 5,000 miles on his vehicle.

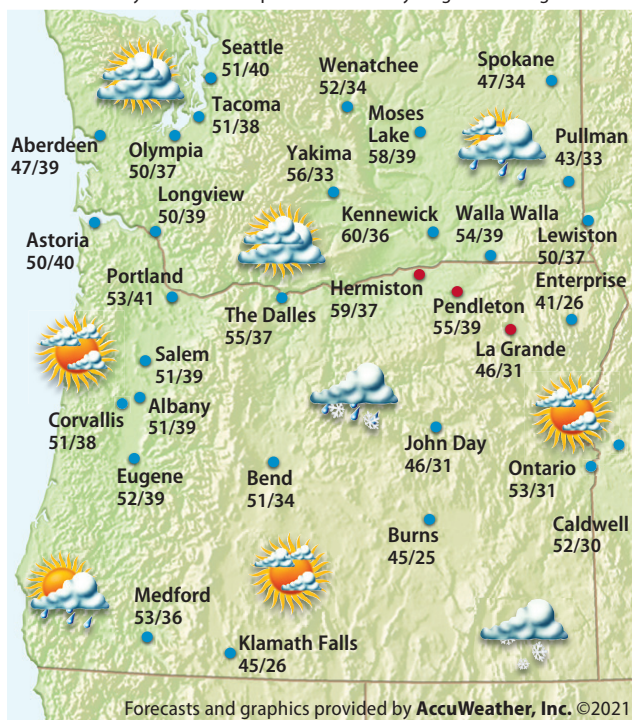
"We'll have a big ceremony in Ontario," Tobiason said. "We should have Idaho officials there, because their bill should be done about the same time."

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
A bit of rain and snow	Mainly cloudy with a shower	A thick cloud cover	Rather cloudy	Sunshine; breezy in the p.m.
55° 39°	56° 32°	53° 33°	57° 35°	59° 34°
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
59° 37°	59° 32°	57° 32°	60° 33°	63° 35°

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	71°	53°
Normals	52°	33°
Records	74° (1972)	1° (2019)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.17"
Year to date 3.02"
Last year to date 4.06"
Normal year to date 2.68"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	76°	37°
Normals	54°	32°
Records	76° (2021)	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 1.08"
Last year to date 0.36"
Normal year to date 2.41"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sun.
Boardman	WSW 8-16	WSW 7-14
Pendleton	WSW 8-16	W 7-14

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:24 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:49 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:04 a.m.
Moonset today	10:47 a.m.

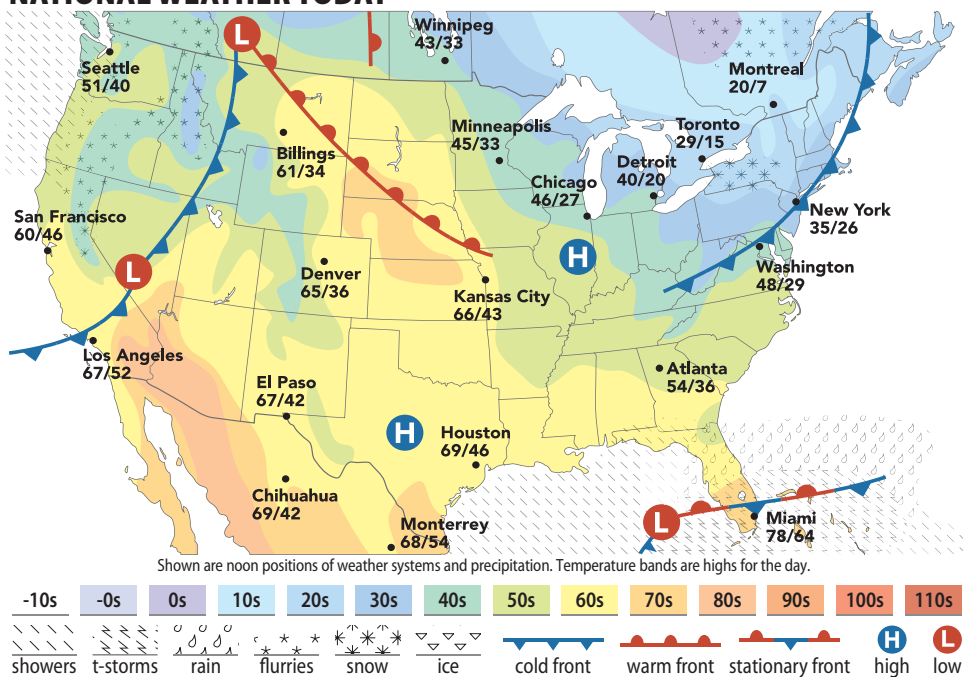
New First Full Last
Mar 13 Mar 21 Mar 28 Apr 4

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 90° in Kingsville, Texas Low -9° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Oregon legislative Democrats float a \$17 an hour minimum wage

By MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

SALEM — Five Democrats in the Oregon Legislature have filed a bill that would increase the state's minimum wage from as low as \$11.50 an hour in some places to \$17 an hour statewide.

That works out to a little more than \$35,000 a year for someone working 40 hours a week, beginning next year. The bill would do away with existing regional differences in Oregon's minimum wage that were created to insulate businesses from higher expenses in rural areas where the cost of living is lower.

Although the proposed minimum wage hike has five co-sponsors, they are all in their first year in the Legislature, and Democratic leaders have not listed the bill among their priorities. That probably means it has little chance of passing — especially if Republicans were to threaten another walkout to block the bill.

Just 1 in 15 Oregon jobs

pay the minimum wage, according to the latest state data.

The hourly minimum goes up every year under provisions of a bill passed in 2016, rising to \$14 an hour this summer in the Portland area. It will increase to \$12.75 an hour in Deschutes County and to \$12 in Crook, Jefferson and other non-urban counties around the state.

Oregon's minimum wage is due to increase to \$14.75 an hour in 2022 in the Portland area, \$13.50 an hour in Deschutes County and \$12.50 in Crook, Jefferson and other non-urban counties. As of July 1, 2023, it would be adjusted annually based on the consumer price index.

House Bill 3351 would do away with regional differences and set a \$17 minimum as of July 1, 2022. Annual increases based on inflation would continue thereafter.

Economists have long debated the effect of higher minimum wages on inflation and employment. The conventional wisdom that higher minimums would lead

to major job losses was tested over the past several years, as Washington, Oregon and many other states raised their minimum wages while unemployment fell to an all-time low in the period before the pandemic.

However, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office concluded last month that a Democratic proposal to increase the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour over the next five years would reduce employment by 1.4 million jobs. The researchers also found that raising the federal minimum would lift 900,000 out of poverty and raise incomes for as many as 27 million Americans.

Democrats had hoped to include the federal minimum wage hike in the coronavirus relief package now working its way through Congress, but that appears unlikely. Senate rules would require at least 60 votes to accomplish that and Republicans — who control half the chamber — are unanimous in their opposition to raising the minimum that high.

IN BRIEF

Schools spent most of federal aid on virtual learning

SALEM — Since the start of the pandemic, the federal government has earmarked nearly \$620 million in emergency funds for Oregon schools.

About \$121 million that has arrived in Oregon so far has helped schools across the state purchase laptops, internet hotspots and program licenses to set up the virtual learning programs that have dominated the Oregon classroom experience over the last year.

But a second round of federal funds is expected to deliver another \$499 million to school districts by the end of the month, the state's share of a \$900 billion relief bill passed in December 2020.

And the bulk of that money should go toward reopening schools.

What that looks like will differ from district to district.

Some may need to upgrade ventilation systems or purchase air filters and fans. Others might opt to renovate classrooms to provide more space for students as the pandemic wears on.

Mike Wiltfong, the Oregon Department of Education's director of school finance and facilities, said schools that are already open for in-person instruction provide a glimpse at how districts will need to spend federal aid.

"We're already seeing where schools are struggling — some students sit in the hallway," he told *The Oregonian*.

Wiltfong is concerned that Oregon schools will start burning through their federal aid allocations as districts begin rolling out their in-person offerings. In December 2020, about 50,000 of Oregon's 580,000 public K-12 students were getting some sort of in-person instruction.

As of last week, that number was just over 136,000.

—EO Media Group

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