

Brown applauds Biden's vaccine timeline

Oregon governor warns in order to meet goal, more vaccine needed

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon would need up to double the doses of COVID-19 vaccine it currently receives to fulfill President Joe Biden's seven-week sprint to allow all adults to be offered inoculation, Oregon health officials said on Friday, March 12.

Gov. Kate Brown and top state medical experts held a press call on March 12 to say they hoped to meet Biden's timeline, but would move cautiously.

Brown said she welcomed Biden's "audacious announcement."

"I will do everything I can to make it happen," she said.

Oregon's current staggered priority groups wouldn't match Biden's deadline until July 1.

States have the central authority over public health and Brown said the present plan would stay in place until there was a guaranteed supply before she would unleash additional demand onto the already strained system.

Oregon officials were only recently told they would receive 200,000 doses per month, up from the previous 120,000 doses.

Asked how much more vaccine Oregon would need to meet Biden's schedule, Allen said it would "require a doubling of those doses."

"It would need to be an increase on that kind of order of magnitude," Allen said. "Maybe 300,000."

Part of the math problem has to do with the vaccines themselves. Until recently, Oregon was only receiving the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, each of which requires two shots given about a month apart.

The state has received the initial shipments of a new vaccine from Johnson & Johnson that requires a single shot.

Brown and Allen both said their caution came from not wanting to set off the kind of policy whiplash that hit Oregonians in mid-January.

When the Trump Administration announced the immediate release of a large stockpile of



Doris Pitzer, 90, receives her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from Jessica Marcum during a vaccination clinic at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston on Feb. 12, 2021.



Registered nurse Kori Hibbard prepares to administer a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to Kari Ferguson, a secretary at Gib Olinger Elementary School in Milton-Freewater, during a vaccination clinic at the Pendleton Convention Center on Jan. 28, 2021.

additional doses, Brown dropped her carefully crafted priority tier policy. She announced everyone in Oregon age 65 and over would be eligible for shots.

Trump officials said within 48

hours that there was no stockpile of new doses.

"This is a deception on a national scale," Brown said at the time.

The governor had to reverse

herself and put eligibility restrictions back in place.

Biden said on Thursday, March 11, that he wanted the nation far enough along in its vaccination program to allow for small Fourth of July celebrations.

"If we all do our part, this country will be vaccinated soon, our economy will be on the mend, our kids will be back in school, and we'll have proven once again that this country can do anything," he said.

Though Oregon officials have a much higher level of confidence in Biden's streamlined transport system and increased manufacturing of vaccine, Allen said supply needed to be on the way first.

"We know the previous administration made previous announcements it was unable to fill," Allen said.

Oregon is currently limiting shots to health workers, residents of nursing homes, educators and day care workers, and most recently, all residents age 65 and older as of March 1.

The next eligible group can seek shots on March 29. It's a long list that includes adults age 45 and older with specific medical issues, agricultural and other food processing workers, homeless people, residents of low-income housing, those displaced by last year's wildfires and wildland firefighters.

Pregnant women age 16 and over were recently added to the group.

OHA has not been able to give estimates on how many people will become eligible on March 29.

May 1 — the date that Biden wants eligibility to be offered to all adults nationwide — is currently listed as adding front-line workers (those who deal daily with the public), those living in multigenerational households, and those age 16-44 with certain medical conditions.

Brown's plan calls for everyone age 45 and older to be eligible on June 1. On July 1, all adults would be able to seek shots.

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state's top infectious expert, said officials were looking at studies from around the country about school reopenings. Some indicate Oregon's mandate for students to be spaced 6 feet apart when they return to the classroom could be cut to 3 feet. No policy change is currently in the pipeline, despite requests to Brown from school districts.

Allen said the vaccination effort involving seniors was going well statewide, though he noted some counties — such as Deschutes — were ahead of the goal to have 75% percent of eligible seniors inoculated, while other counties lagged behind.

Brown praised the support of Oregon's congressional delegation for Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus legislation, which includes \$1,400 direct payments to Americans, aid for COVID-19 distribution, unemployment aid, and funds to buttress state and local budgets strained by the pandemic.

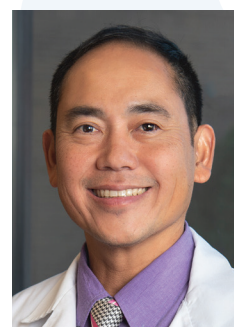
Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, joined all House Republicans in opposing the bill, saying it was too expensive and included too much non-pandemic related spending. The rest of Oregon's congressional delegation — all Democrats — supported the bill.

GOOD SHEPHERD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Let's Get Your Sleep Back on Track

Introducing Good Shepherd Sleep Solutions

Comprehensive Sleep Lab & Clinic for Sleep Studies



Jak Nikomborirak, MD
Board Certified Sleep Medicine Specialist
22 Years of Experience



Vicki Kent, ARNP
Board Certified Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner
38 Years of Experience

Welcoming New Patients
541.667.3834

610 NW 11th Street, Suite E-19
Hermiston, OR 97838
www.gshealth.org/sleep-medicine

GOOD SHEPHERD
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM