

# Legislative budget writers come up with 2021-23 framework

By PETER WONG  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The co-leaders of the Oregon Legislature's budget committee have laid out their framework for balancing the next two-year state budget with more than \$2 billion in federal aid from President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan.

The framework, which they announced Wednesday, March 24, will enable lawmakers to maintain state aid to public schools, state-supported health care and other services without many of the cuts proposed in Gov. Kate Brown's original \$25.6 billion budget back on Dec. 1, 2020.

The state school fund will be at \$9.1 billion, excluding the money from the corporate activity tax that districts get for targeted programs and separate federal aid to enable districts to reopen schools.

The Oregon Health Plan, which enrolls 1.25 million low-income people, will be maintained without cuts. The federal government has raised its share of the joint federal-state program through Dec. 31 of this year.

The budget framework also proposes \$780 million from Oregon's \$2.6 billion share of federal aid for programs and services envisioned under Biden's plan,



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which became law on March 12. The overall \$1.9 trillion plan passed both houses of Congress without any Republican support.

"The federal aid in the American Rescue Plan is a game-changer," Rep. Dan Rayfield, a Democrat from Corvallis and one of the chief budget writers, said in a statement. "This support is critical to our recovery and will help the state continue vital programs and services for Oregonians who have been disproportionately impacted by the crises of the past year." But the budget framework

of almost \$28 billion from the tax-supported general fund and lottery proceeds will leave \$520 million of that federal aid unspent until the 2023-25 budget cycle, when tax collections are also projected to fall short of meeting current service levels.

The budget committee leaders also proposed a record \$250 million allocation to the state emergency fund, given the continuing uncertainties about the coronavirus pandemic and wildfires. (The Legislature gave more money to the Emer-

gency Board, which decides budget matters between sessions, but only after two special sessions in 2020.)

"Our framework addresses unprecedented challenges as we await further federal guidance with respect to the American Rescue Plan money designated for Oregon," Sen. Betsy Johnson, a Democrat from Scappoose and a budget co-leader, said. "Our document is sufficiently flexible to respond during budget negotiations. However, it also prudently anticipates potential challenges for the 2023-

25 budget."

Counties and cities also will get share of federal aid under Biden's plan. Cities with populations of 50,000 and up, and all counties, will get their money from the U.S. Treasury. Smaller cities will get theirs through the state, based on population.

Unlike Brown's budget, which proposed tapping the state education reserve fund, the legislative framework would leave both the education and general reserve funds untouched. Lawmakers did draw \$400 million from the education reserve fund last year, cutting it in half.

The state budget spends more money than the tax-supported general fund and lottery proceeds. But most of that money is in the form of earmarked federal grants or other sources, such as fuel taxes.

## Shifting millions

The state's new, two-year budget cycle starts July 1. Instead of field meetings, which the pandemic precludes, the budget committee will schedule virtual hearings soon on the framework.

"This is just the beginning of the process," House Republican Leader Christine Dragan of Canby said in a statement. "We look forward

to hearing from our communities and working with our colleagues to determine how we can provide ongoing support for recovery and continue the programs and services important to families and children."

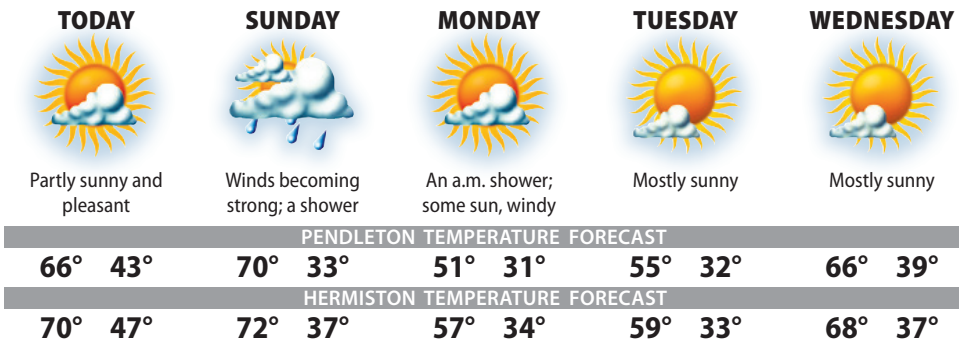
Awaiting votes in both chambers is a continuing resolution that keeps agencies funded past June 30, if lawmakers have not yet approved their budgets.

Unlike the governor, who proposes a single budget, lawmakers approve individual agency budgets and other bills that fit into the co-chairs' framework. The Legislature's budget analysts keep track of the bills.

Budget subcommittees have heard agency presentations, but still have to do much of the detailed work on individual agencies. The first agency budget emerged from the full committee on March 19.

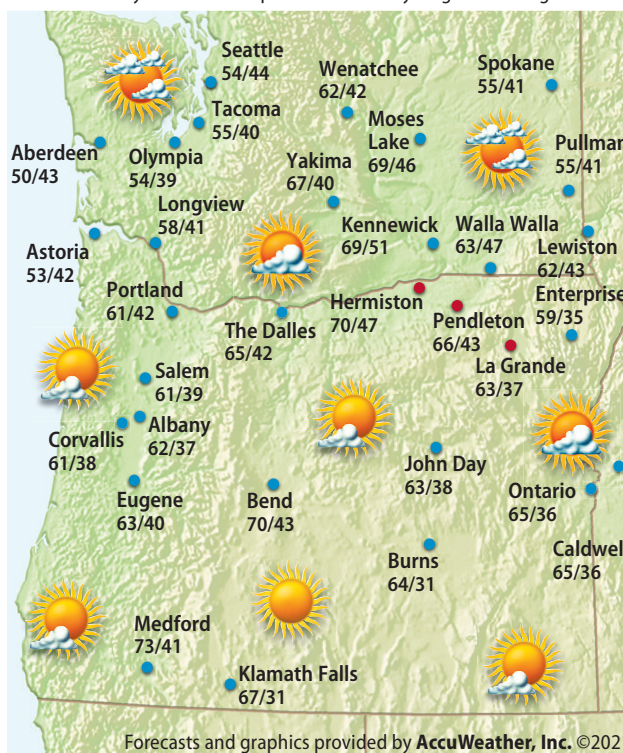
Brown's budget proposes a shift of \$280 million into programs intended to overcome the effects of discrimination against Oregon's racial and ethnic minorities. The budget co-leaders said they are continuing discussions with lawmakers of color — who now hold 12 of the 90 House and Senate seats — and others about how to incorporate those changes into the budget.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



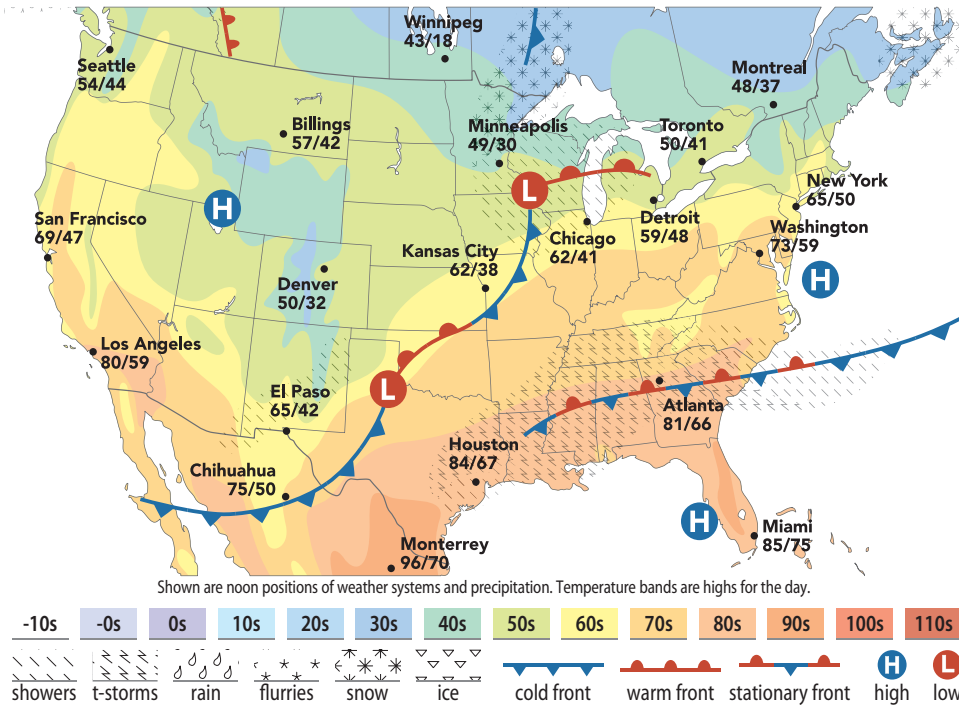
## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	57°	36°
Normals	57°	37°
Records	73° (2015)	21° (1913)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace	
Month to date	0.30"	
Normal month to date	1.18"	
Year to date	3.32"	
Last year to date	4.67"	
Normal year to date	3.69"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	61°	39°
Normals	60°	36°
Records	82° (1960)	20° (1955)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"	
Month to date	0.11"	
Normal month to date	0.76"	
Year to date	1.19"	
Last year to date	0.48"	
Normal year to date	3.00"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Sun.
Boardman	WSW 6-12	WSW 10-20
Pendleton	W 6-12	WSW 12-25
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:45 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:17 p.m.	
Moonrise today	6:11 p.m.	
Moonset today	6:42 a.m.	
	Full	Last
	New	First
	Mar 28	Apr 4
	Apr 11	Apr 19

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 93° in Zapata, Texas Low 5° in Antero Reservoir, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Tribes call on Biden, Congress to remove four Snake River dams

Associated Press

SEATTLE — A coalition of Northwest tribal leaders called on President Joe Biden and Congress on Thursday, March 25, to remove four massive dams on the Snake River to help restore salmon runs.

In a letter to the administration and to members of Congress from Idaho, Oregon and Washington, the members of the Northwest Tribal Salmon Alliance called the potential extinction of the salmon a "moral failure of the highest order."

Northwest Republicans generally oppose removing the dams, saying they are economic engines for the region and it makes little sense to abandon a source of hydroelectric power in an age of climate change. Furthermore, they argue, there's no guarantee removing them would save the fish.

But last month, Idaho

Republican Rep. Mike Simpson called for spending \$33 billion to breach the dams and to replace the transportation, irrigation and power generation the dams provide.

The letter was signed by members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Lummi Nation, Makah Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, The Tulalip Tribes and Yakama Nation.

"Salmon are inseparable from who we are," they wrote. "Even as our ancestors' lives and homelands were threatened, they made sure to protect within the treaties our ancestral salmon lifeway. Those treaties were promises made by the United States government. Those promises must be kept."

Conservationists say since construction on the dams was completed in the 1970s, wild Snake River salmon populations have plummeted by more

than 90%.

In the past two decades, \$17 billion in improvements to the dams have done little to help fish, which are largely cut off from thousands of miles of spawning habitat upstream. The dams slow the water, causing it to heat up to levels that can kill the fish and forcing juvenile salmon to swim harder and to become more exposed to predators on their journey to the ocean.

The plan calls for the removal of the Lower Granite Dam near Colfax in 2030, with removal of three other dams — Ice Harbor, Little Goose and Lower Monumental — in 2031. The dams were built in the 1950s and 1960s to provide power and irrigation and to make navigable a portion of the Snake River from Lewiston, Idaho, to the Tri-Cities of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco in Washington, and downriver to Pacific Ocean ports.

## IN BRIEF

### Oregon speeds up COVID-19 vaccine timeline — again

SALEM — Another week and another big promise from the Biden administration has Oregon speeding up its coronavirus vaccine timeline once again.

Gov. Kate Brown's office announced Friday, March 26, that frontline workers, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and all adults 16 and older with underlying health conditions will be eligible for vaccine appointments starting April 5. That's a full two weeks earlier than the previous timeline, which was announced on March 19. All Oregon adults will be eligible for vaccines by May 1.

The announcement comes after President Joe Biden said he wants 200 million COVID-19 vaccines administered by his 100th day in office.

"With so many counties across Oregon ready to begin the next phases of vaccination, I am accelerating our vaccination timelines statewide rather than proceeding county-by-county," Brown said in a press release.

Twenty-two counties wrote to the Oregon Health Authority in the past week, saying that they'd largely finished vaccinating all seniors who wanted shots. That allowed those counties to move onto the next priority group — which includes adults 45 and older with underlying health conditions, pregnant people, people

experiencing homelessness and others — ahead of schedule.

The governor's office did not specify how this decision would affect when COVID-19 vaccines will be available to the general public. The president and Oregon leaders previously set a target of May 1 to have vaccines available to all.

### Rocket debris lights up skies over the Pacific Northwest

SEATTLE — Burning debris from a rocket lit up Pacific Northwest skies Thursday night, March 25, the National Weather Service in Seattle said.

"The widely reported bright objects in the sky were debris from a Falcon 9 rocket 2nd stage that did not successfully have a deorbit burn," the service said in a tweet about the astral occurrence that the *Seattle Times* reported was seen shortly after 9 p.m.

There were no reports of damage or other impacts on the ground.

The rocket delivered Starlink satellites, built in Redmond, Washington, into orbit earlier this week, the *Times* reported.

SpaceX said Wednesday, March 24, that the Falcon 9's first stage returned to Earth and landed as planned on its ocean-going barge off the coast of Florida.

— Associated Press and Oregon Public Broadcasting

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