

Oregon Senate advances \$9.3B school funding plan

By HILLARY BORRUD
The Oregonian

SALEM — A \$9.3 billion plan to fund Oregon schools for the next two years is headed to the state House after the Senate passed it on a bipartisan vote with little debate on Tuesday, May 25.

The state school fund budget includes \$300 million more than necessary to maintain current level K-12 services and programs, legislative analysts said.

That proposed funding level sparked controversy earlier this month, when Gov. Kate Brown sent a letter to legislative leaders urging them not to pump more money into the state's funding system in which districts receive formula-based distributions to spend as they decide.

Advocates for educational equity have been pushing for the state to overhaul the funding system to target more investments to historically underserved students, including children in poverty and students of color.

Under Oregon's school funding formula, districts receive much more money for students with disabilities and somewhat more money for those living in poverty or learning English as a second language. However, it delivers the same for white and Asian students as Black, Latino and Indigenous students, for whom schools have delivered poor outcomes in the past.

Lawmakers have discussed potential changes in private meetings this session but opted not to



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Students at Echo School sit socially distanced in John Cox's high school history class on Feb. 2, 2021. The Oregon Senate on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, advanced a \$9.3 billion school funding plan, \$300 million more than necessary to maintain the current level of K-12 services and programs.

make any changes to Senate Bill 5514, which the Senate approved on May 25.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Sen. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, said other state funding streams and unspecified proposals still under consideration this session "directly target the educational disparities for Black, Indigenous and students of color."

"All, in my view, should be targeting an expectation that all of Oregon's students are encouraged to enjoy learning and tap into the innate curiosity that they are born with," Frederick said.

Stand for Children Oregon Executive Director Toya Fick, a proponent of changing the state school fund formula, has pointed to rising graduation rates among Black and

Latino students in recent years as evidence the state's targeted investments to help those students are paying off and should be expanded.

Others, including some lawmakers, have argued the state cannot direct more funding to help underserved students until it further boosts the base state school fund.

School district officials and the statewide teachers union produced

their own cost estimate for 2021-23 and it was \$600 million higher than legislative analysts calculated, at \$9.6 billion. That funding level would allow districts, including some with declining student enrollment, to avoid layoffs, supporters said. A school boards representative vowed on May 25 to continue pushing for an additional \$300 million in the remaining month of the legislative session.

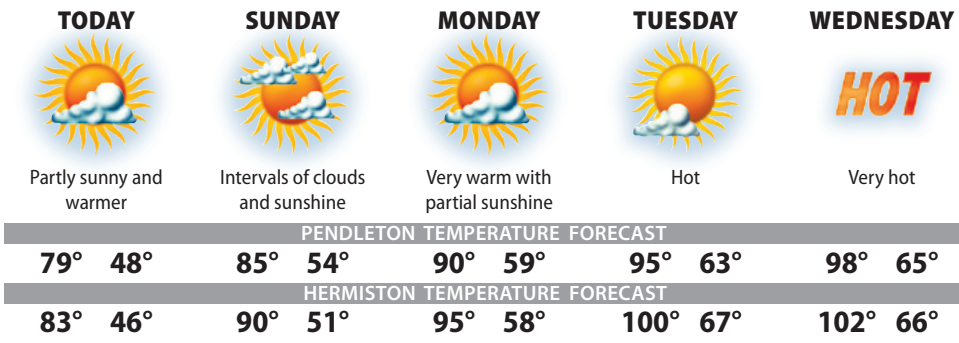
Republicans, who are in the minority in the Legislature, are pushing for schools to fully reopen for in-person classes in the fall, and they support the higher school fund level as a way to achieve that.

The state school fund is the largest single line-item in the state budget and its passage will give school districts around the state certainty of the funding amounts they can expect as they finalize their local budgets for the next year. Lawmakers must still decide how to provide \$200 million of the school fund money, after they ditched a plan to tap a reserve account for that amount in the face of criticism from the governor.

With a \$1 billion windfall revealed in the latest revenue forecast last week and \$2.6 billion from the latest federal relief package, there is no shortage of options.

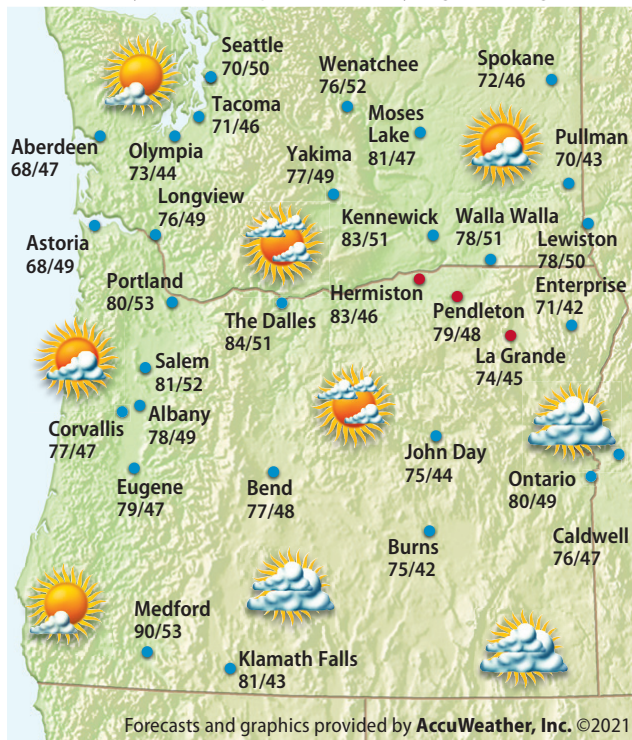
If the House passes the \$9.3 billion budget, this will be at least the fourth biennium in a row the Legislature will have approved a larger state school fund than legislative analysts said was necessary to continue services and programs.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



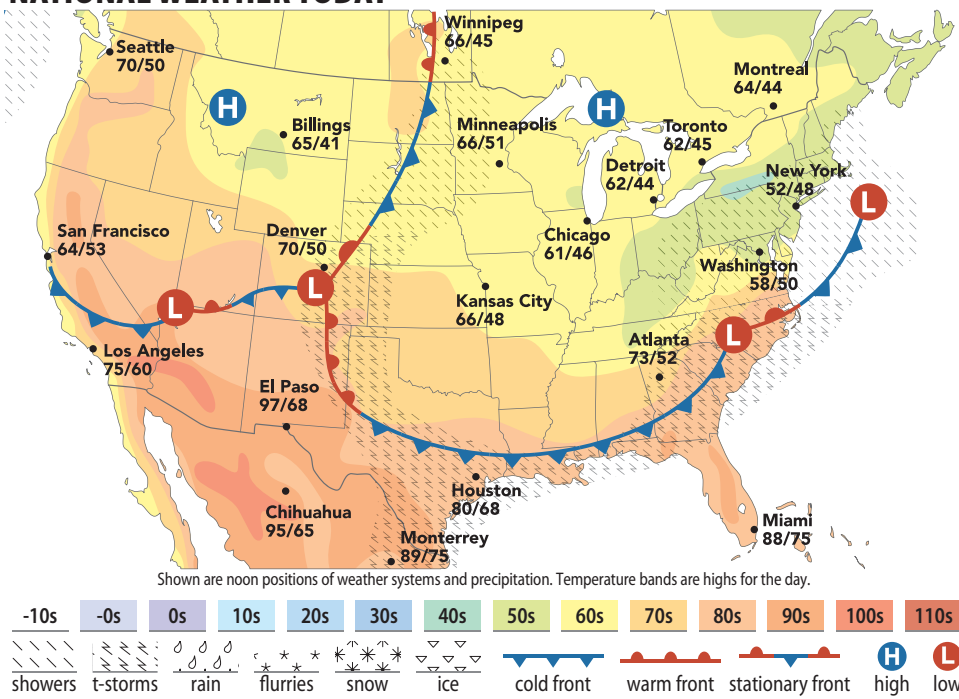
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	67°	44°	
Normals	73°	49°	
Records	100° (1934)	31° (1918)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.47"		
Normal month to date	1.23"		
Year to date	4.03"		
Last year to date	7.58"		
Normal year to date	6.34"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	72°	47°	
Normals	75°	50°	
Records	102° (1934)	37° (1954)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.42"		
Normal month to date	1.01"		
Year to date	1.70"		
Last year to date	1.42"		
Normal year to date	5.00"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Sun.		
Boardman	NE 4-8	NE 3-6	
Pendleton	NNE 6-12	NNW 4-8	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:11 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:35 p.m.		
Moonrise today	none		
Moonset today	8:11 a.m.		
Last New First Full			
June 2	June 10	June 17	June 24

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 101° in Needles, Calif. Low 18° in Brimson, Minn.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Oregon discloses huge surge in wasted COVID-19 vaccines

The Oregonian

SALEM — More than half of all Oregonians are now at least partially vaccinated against COVID-19. But demand has slowed in recent weeks, and that's apparently playing a role in the growing number of wasted doses reported by state health officials.

On Tuesday, May 25, the Oregon Health Authority reported 9,090 vaccine doses have now been wasted, spoiled or expired since December. That's more than double the total disclosed last week, which stood at 4,418, and it's more than quadruple the 1,922 reported three weeks ago.

For context, Oregon through May 4 had reported administering nearly 3.1 million doses of vaccine, meaning just 0.06% of doses had been wasted, spoiled or expired.

But since then, Oregon has reported administering 719,665 doses against 7,168 that have been wasted, according to calculations of state data by *The Oregonian*.

That means that for every 100 doses recently administered, one dose has been wasted — a far higher rate than during the first five months of vaccinations.

Tim Heider, a spokesperson for OHA, said in an email that wastage "may increase as the vaccine rollout continues." He said that's because vial sizes for some vaccines have increased, those vials may be opened without every dose being used, and more providers, including smaller sites, are now receiving vaccines.

Heider's response matches wording from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention document written last week, which he did not attribute to the CDC.

"CDC and our partners are doing everything possible to minimize the amount of vaccine that goes unused," the federal document reads. "We recognize that as we continue to create more opportunities to vaccinate more people, it may increase the likelihood of leaving unused doses in a vial," the CDC document

also said. "While we want to continue to follow best practices to use every dose possible, we do not want that to be at the expense of missing an opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person when they are ready to get vaccinated."

OHA began regularly disclosing wasted doses in early April, when only 656 doses had been wasted compared to more than 2 million administered.

"We believe that our health system partners are managing their vaccine responsibly and doing everything that they can to minimize waste," the agency's chief financial officer, Dave Baden, said in an April 7 statement.

"At this point, considering the logistical complexity of operating large-scale vaccination programs, the small amount of wasted vaccine in Oregon is expected and not surprising," he added. "This amount is a small fraction of the more than 2 million doses that have been safely delivered, managed and injected in the arms of Oregonians."

IN BRIEF

Oregon surpasses 200,000 COVID-19 cases, but rates continue to decrease

SALEM — Oregon has surpassed 200,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, health officials said on Thursday, May 27. The state's death toll is 2,660.

Oregon Health Authority Director Dr. Patrick Allen said this is a reminder the pandemic is not over.

"As we head into the Memorial Day holiday weekend, this milestone is a grim reminder that while case counts are decreasing statewide in large part due to vaccination, there remains a risk of COVID-19 in Oregon, especially for those who are not yet vaccinated," Allen said in a press release. "I urge caution for Oregonians who are not yet vaccinated. You are still at risk of infection and should wear a mask indoors and practice

physical distance precautions." Despite the grim milestone, Oregon's daily case count, hospitalizations, deaths and positivity rates have been decreasing.

OHA reported on May 26 that during the week of May 17, the number of daily cases decreased by 25% from the previous week. Coronavirus-related hospitalizations during that week were 224 — the lowest figure in five weeks.

Earlier this month, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown set statewide and county COVID-19 vaccination targets, with the hope of reopening the state's economy.

Brown said most statewide coronavirus related restrictions will be lifted when 70% of Oregon's residents who are 16 years and older receive their first COVID-19 vaccine dose. Currently, more than half of Oregon's eligible population who are 16 or older have received at least their first vaccine dose.

— Oregon Public Broadcasting

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