

# Oregon ag overtime bill amended with \$100M price tag

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — A bill requiring Oregon farmers to pay higher overtime wages has passed a key legislative committee, though it now includes a hefty price tag that may hinder further progress.

The House Rules Committee voted 4-3 to approve House Bill 2358 with an amendment that would phase out the agricultural overtime exemption over three years and allocate \$100 million to help farmers make the transition.

To put that amount in perspective, it's more than twice the general fund tax dollars appropriated for the entire Oregon Department of Agriculture during the most recent biennium.

Before the House votes on HB 2358, it must first clear the budget-setting Joint Committee on Ways and Means. The bill would then need to pass the Senate before the end of this year's legislative session, which is constitutionally required to end by June 27.

Under the amended version of HB 2358, farm workers would be owed one-and-a-half the regular wage rate after 55 hours per week in 2022, after 48 hours



Workers harvest Oregon wine grapes in this file photo. A bill that would end the Oregon agriculture industry's exemption from higher overtime wages has been amended to include \$100 million to help farmers transition.

Andrea Johnson/Capital Press

per week in 2023 and after 40 hours per week in 2024.

Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, said that "everybody thought the bill was dead" but she proposed the amendment to provide justice for farm workers while alleviating the economic burden on their employers.

"It won't make them whole by any stretch but it will help them transition," she said during a June 16 legislative hearing.

The \$100 million would be overseen by the Oregon Business Development Department, which would pay eligible farmers for 80%

of the amount they spent on overtime in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Priority would go to farmers who paid the highest proportion of their net income in overtime and who employed fewer than 25 workers per year.

Requiring farmers to pay overtime wages may cause

a shift to mechanization or drive some crops out-of-state but it's ultimately what's fair to workers, Salinas said.

With the neighboring states of Washington and Californian ending the agricultural overtime exemption, "I don't see how Oregon can avoid this," she said.

Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said there is "broad recognition that something should be done" about the agricultural overtime exemption, but he would prefer that a task force issue recommendations for change later this year.

For example, farm workers could be paid overtime wages after 40 hours per week except for the harvest periods for specific labor-intensive crops, he said. "Something like that could be a compromise solution."

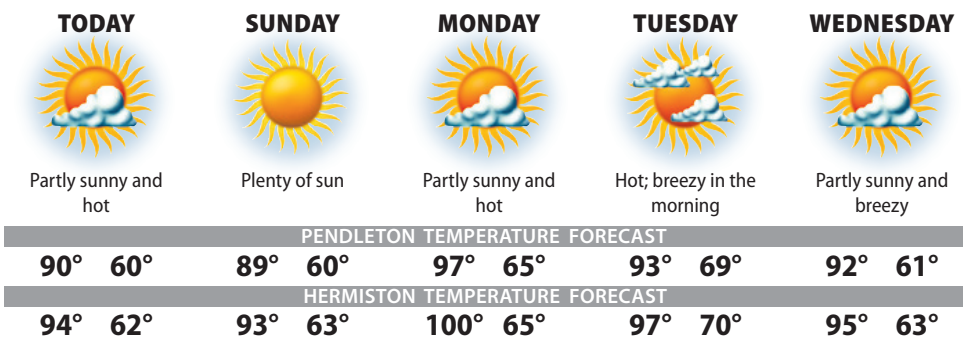
Establishing a task force is "not an intention to dodge" the issue but would "deal thoughtfully with the unintended consequences," said Rep. Christine Drazen, R-Canby.

Farmers must accept market prices for crops and livestock, unlike other industries that can raise prices to compensate for Oregon's stricter labor regulations, she said. "That isn't how this industry works."

Growers cannot force buyers to purchase products from Oregon instead of competing regions, so they'll switch to other crops and reduce the variety of what's grown in-state, Drazen said.

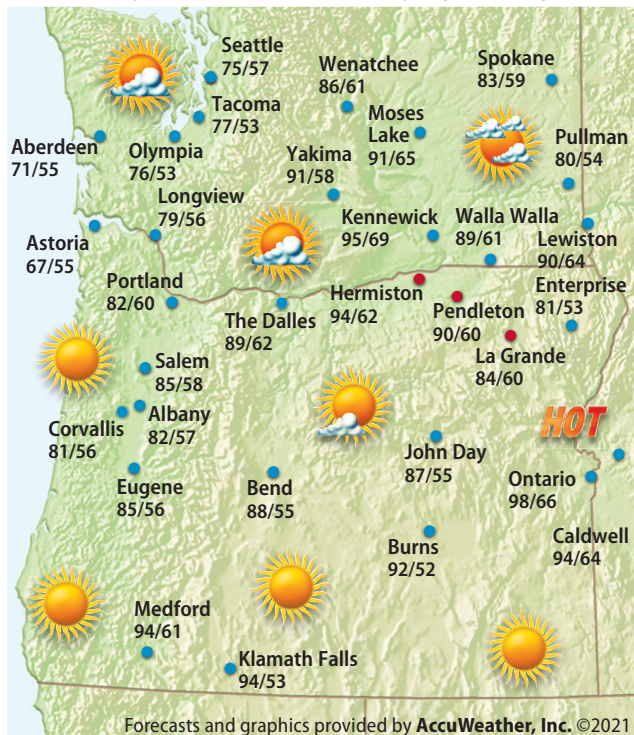
"We feed people out of Oregon and I want that to continue to be the case," she said.

## 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	89°	49°
Normals	79°	53°
Records	100° (1961)	38° (1902)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.27"
Normal month to date	0.86"
Year to date	4.30"
Last year to date	8.55"
Normal year to date	7.37"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	92°	52°
Normals	80°	54°
Records	108° (1961)	40° (2010)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.23"
Normal month to date	0.41"
Year to date	1.93"
Last year to date	1.61"
Normal year to date	5.52"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Sun.
Boardman SW 7-14	N 6-12
Pendleton W 8-16	NNW 6-12

**SUN AND MOON**

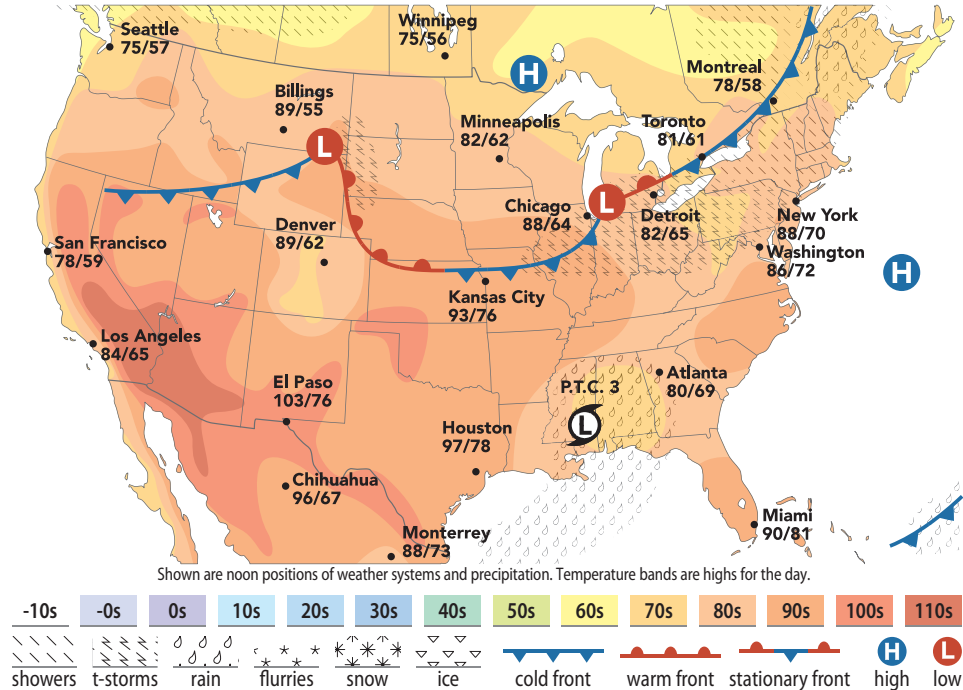
Sunrise today	5:05 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:48 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:47 p.m.
Moonset today	1:55 a.m.

Full Last New First  
June 24 July 1 July 9 July 17

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 120° in Needles, Calif. Low 29° in Stanley, Idaho

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Bill Gates' company bidding in auction of Easterday properties

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

KENNEWICK — Farms owned by Eastern Washington cattleman Cody Easterday will be sold Thursday, June 17, at an auction expected to draw bids from firms associated with Bill Gates and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Delaware-based 100C LLC, linked to Gates in a previous large farmland sale in Eastern Washington, has bid \$200.8 million for properties owned by Easterday, his wife and mother, said Richard Pachulski, the attorney representing the family's holdings, on June 15 in federal bankruptcy court.

The bid topped the \$193 million offer submitted by the Mormon church's Farmland Reserve Inc. in May. Farmland's bid set a baseline value and gave other bidders something to top in submitting written bids earlier this month.

Pachulski said 100C's bid set the new floor. The auction will be open to only qualified bidders. Bidders will have to up the price in \$1 million increments, Pachulski said.

The sale will transfer an operation that Easterday's grandfather, Ervin Easterday, started in 1958 by buying 300 undeveloped acres in the Columbia Basin. The family farm grew to more than 18,000 acres of potatoes, onions, corn and wheat, according to court records.

Cody Easterday, 49, defrauded Tyson Fresh Meats of about \$233 million and another unnamed company of about \$11 million by billing the companies for more than 200,000 head of nonexistent cattle.

Easterday pleaded guilty March 31 to one count of wire fraud and is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 4 in U.S. District Court for Eastern Washington. He faces up

to 20 years in prison and has been ordered to pay restitution.

After the fraud was uncovered, the Easterdays filed for bankruptcy. Tyson estimated in a court document that it represents about 90% of the money owed to dozens of creditors.

Properties to be auctioned include Nine Canyon Farm, Goose Gap Farm, River Farm and Cox Farm.

Oregon Public Broadcasting first reported Gates' apparent interest in buying the property. Efforts to reach 100C LLC were unsuccessful.

The Land Report, a magazine that follows the real estate industry, linked Gates to 100C LLC in the 2018 acquisition of 14,500 acres of farmland in Benton County in Eastern Washington.

The publication in January reported that Bill and Melinda Gates are the largest farmland owners in the U.S., with 242,000 acres in 19 states.

## IN BRIEF

### Oregon senator faces potential recall

JOHN DAY — State Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, faces a potential recall effort.

Chief petitioner Patrick A. Kopke-Hales of Mount Vernon filed a prospective recall petition with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office on June 14.

Kopke-Hales wrote in his justification that Findley had acted "against the values and principles of the constituents he represents" for supporting Senate Bill 865, and for not walking out to prevent the passage of Senate Bill 554 on gun control legislation.

Findley — who represents Senate District 30 covering all of Baker, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Malheur and Wheeler counties and parts of Deschutes, Lake and Wasco counties — told the Blue Mountain Eagle he was in the final days of the legislative session and there is too much going on right now to be "distracted" by "something else."

Kopke-Hales declined to comment.

Kopke-Hales wrote in the prospective petition that Findley betrayed the "will of the people" by introducing Senate Bill 865. The proposed legislation would have prevented elected officials at the state level — including governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, labor commissioner, state lawmaker, supreme court judge or appeals court judge — from serving as an elected officer on the state central committee of a political party.

Kopke-Hales wrote that Findley "facilitated the passing" of SB 554 by not walking out of the session to prevent Democrats from having the required quorum to approve the bill in the Senate, where it passed 16-7. Findley voted against it. It was signed two weeks ago by Gov. Kate Brown.

Findley said SB 865 was a bill constituents requested he introduce that has since been withdrawn.

Findley said he had been questioned on SB 554 and he chose to stay in session and fight the bill's passage.

—EO Media Group

**CORRECTIONS:** In the brief "Cattlemen's association awards scholarships," published Tuesday, June 8, on page A6, Jaiden Mahoney's name was misspelled.

# EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211  
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:



East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.

Copyright © 2021, EO Media Group

### Circulation Dept.

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

### Single copy price:

\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

### ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director (Eastside) EO Media Group:

• Karrine Brogoitti

541-963-3161 • kbrogotti@eomediagroup.com

Multimedia Consultants:

• Kelly Schwirse

541-564-4531 • kschwirse@eastoregonian.com

• Audra Workman

541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Business Office

• Dayle Stinson

541-966-0824 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

### Classified & Legal Advertising

1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678  
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legal@eastoregonian.com

### NEWS

- To submit news tips and press releases: call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com
- To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or call Renee Struthers at 541-966-0818.
- To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
- To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

### COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska  
541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com