

# Staffing at hospitals a concern for many, survey shows

By SUZANNE ROIG  
Oregon Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Area hospitals struggling to have enough staff or supplies to treat all patients as the pandemic continues is a chief concern among Oregonians surveyed recently by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center.

A full 60% of those surveyed from Oct. 8-18 were “very concerned” that hospitals would not have enough staff to treat and oversee patients. Fewer than 5% were not concerned at all, according to the online survey of Oregon residents 18 and older.

More than a third, 34%, said that they “somewhat agreed” that COVID-19 patients should not be given priority over patients with other medical conditions, according to the survey. And 30% said they “strongly agreed” with that statement.

“The responses indicate that people are not experiencing impacts from shortages,” said Amaury Vogel, Oregon Values and Beliefs Center associate executive director. “Those 75 and older were far and away the most likely to say that COVID-19 patients shouldn’t be seen over those with life-threatening illnesses.”

Ruth Martina Muller, a Bend resident, is among those who believe the thousands of patients waiting for surgery because there isn’t a bed at a hospital have been inconvenienced the most during COVID-19 surges.



Judith Lindsey pulls on a second set of gloves while preparing to enter the room of a COVID-19 patient Aug. 19, 2021, at CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton.

St. Charles Health System, a regional hospital for eight Oregon counties, has said more than 2,000 non-emergency surgeries requiring an overnight stay had to be postponed because of a shortage of beds and staff.

“I have had several of my friends, one who was in excruciating agony, have to wait for surgery,” Muller said. “He couldn’t get in for back surgery for four months because the COVID-19 patients were tying up the beds.”

Tim Nihoul, a former Redmond resident, who was in Corvallis, said he has heard of many people who had been denied treatment because the hospital was full. Also concerning to Nihoul was how many people he had heard of with underlying health conditions who didn’t want to seek treatment because of the coronavirus.

The survey also asked if the impact of COVID-19 on health care workers will have

a negative long-term effect on the pool of health care workers. Only 13% disagreed with the statement but 79% agreed, according to the survey.

In questions that looked at the effect of COVID-19, from having enough supplies to beds, most respondents were “very” or “somewhat concerned.” Three fourths of the survey respondents were “somewhat” or “very concerned” that the hospitals serving their area didn’t have

Ben Loneragan/East Oregonian, File

enough medical supplies and 86% were “concerned” about not having enough staff.

“It’s not that there’s not enough beds,” Nihoul said. “It’s the staff that’s a problem. It’s a result of vaccine mandates that have just kicked in. I’m not an antivaxer, but I think it should be my choice whether I have a job or not.”

“It shouldn’t be dictated by bureaucrats or elected officials who may not follow legitimate science.”

## MORE INFORMATION

The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, a nonpartisan charitable organization, has partnered with Pamplin Media Group and EO Media Group to report how Oregonians think and feel about various subjects. The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center is committed to the highest level of public opinion research. To obtain that, the nonprofit is building the largest online research panel of Oregonians in history to ensure that all voices are represented in discussions of public policy in a valid and statistically reliable way. Selected panelists earn points for their participation, which can be redeemed for cash or donated to a charity. To learn more, visit [oregonvbc.org](http://oregonvbc.org).

The center’s survey was sent to 1,403 Oregon residents. The survey’s margin of error is between 1.6% to 2.6%. The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center is an independent, nonpartisan organization.

The largest demographic sample was among the 30-44 year olds and was nearly split evenly between males and females. The bulk of the respondents self-identified as white, earning less than \$25,000 a year.

## U.S. senators propose national monument status for area near Oregon’s Painted Hills

By BRADLEY W. PARKS

Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon’s U.S. senators have proposed a new national monument at Sutton Mountain near Central Oregon’s Painted Hills.

Sutton Mountain stands in the backdrop of the iconic view overlooking the autumnal hues of the Painted Hills. The hills themselves already are featured as one of three distinct units of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

Oregon Democratic Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden on Wednesday, Nov. 3, announced legislation to protect an even larger area surrounding the Painted Hills as part of a new Sutton Mountain National Monument.

“With this legislation, we’ll make sure the public will be able to experience some of Oregon’s most incredible landmarks for generations to come, while also creating jobs and economic opportunities in the county right now,” Merkley said in a press release.

The 66,000-acre monument would include Sutton Mountain itself along with several popular recreation sites like Pats Cabin, Sand Mountain and Priest Hole.

The area has long been a target for conservation. Thousands of acres are already protected as Wilderness Study Areas, which are places identified by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management as having wilderness characteristics eligible for further protection.

The Bend-based Oregon Natural Desert Association has long supported additional safeguards for Sutton Mountain. The region provides habitat for a wide array of plant and animal life, including herds



Sonya Lang/Contributed Photo, File

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— Ryan Houston, Oregon Natural Desert Association executive director

of pronghorn, elk and mule deer.

“Many folks don’t know what it’s named or what it’s all about,” said ONDA executive director Ryan Houston, “but it’s a pretty unique feature out there and it’s a pretty wonderful place to explore.”

Past attempts to create a federal wilderness at Sutton Mountain in 2015 and 2019 have died in Congress. This latest effort takes a different approach by proposing it as a national monument.

A monument designation

at Sutton Mountain would block future mining claims within the monument boundary. It also would require a management plan to reduce

fire risk and promote recreational access, among other priorities. Ranchers would be able to continue grazing livestock within the monument.

According to Merkley’s press release, the proposal has the support of several conservation groups as well as the city of Mitchell, which has seen economic benefits from Painted Hills tourism and visiting cyclists.

Oregon has four national monuments: the John Day Fossil Beds, Oregon Caves, Newberry National Volcanic Monument and the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

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## Harney County votes for possible move to Idaho

By DOUGLAS PERRY  
The Oregonian

BURNS — Harney County voters on Tuesday, Nov. 2, showed their love for Idaho.

Ballot measure 13-18, which requires local officials to hold meetings about moving the small rural Oregon county into Idaho, passed with more than 63% of the vote. The unofficial results: 1,567 for and 917 against.

Harney became the eighth of Oregon’s 36 counties to vote for considering adjusting Oregon’s border to put much of rural Eastern and Southern Oregon in Idaho.

“Rural Oregon is declaring as loudly as it can that it does not consent to being misgoverned by Oregon’s leadership and chooses to be governed as part of a state that understands rural Oregon’s values and way of making a living,” said Mike McCarter, who heads Move Oregon’s Border for a Greater Idaho, which is behind the initiatives.

Despite such strong rhetoric, McCarter has said his movement is an

effort to make everyone — urban liberals who’d remain in Oregon and rural conservatives who’d leave — happier, calling Move Oregon’s Border a “peaceful revolution.”

“It’s a lifestyle/values judgment between urban and rural more than anything else,” he told The Oregonian.

These ballot initiatives are nonbinding; the point of them, McCarter says, is to force Idaho’s and Oregon’s legislatures to take up the issue, which is highly unlikely. If Idaho and Oregon were to negotiate a border adjustment, the U.S. Congress would have to sign off on it.

The other counties that have voted for a Move Oregon’s Border-backed initiative in the last two years: Baker, Grant, Jefferson, Lake, Malheur, Sherman and Union. Two small counties have voted against the border-moving idea.

Douglas and Klamath counties likely will be next to vote; McCarter said his group has enough signatures to put the border-adjustment question before their voters next May.

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