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their families but also business property owners and their families, and the vendors to those businesses and their families. "If this keeps up, the only take-out food will be from the state's bread lines," said Hannigan. "You can hear the despair in their voices," said Neigh. "They've done the best they can to reconfigure their entire business model without support to meet mandated changes. They've got rent, utilities, employees, and other overhead. They cannot wait any longer, and it's the holidays."

Quick-Warner said it was the chamber presidents' hope that the legislature and the governor will recognize the dire impacts and provide the support needed for businesses bridge the financial gap.

"They've ordered these shutdowns, freezes and other restrictions. Now it's time to offer first aid to stop the bleed-out and prevent the eventual death of thousands of businesses," she said.

The letter to the governor and legislators explained that small businesses such as restaurants, movie theaters, bowling alleys, fitness centers and others have had to bear the brunt of decisions

that have "fully and indefinitely restricted their ability to operate" and that communities are seeing only the beginning of a dominoes-like fall as a number of local establishments — and some of the county's most iconic establishments — close permanently.

Chamber presidents said they feel the state should be including the economic impacts on local businesses in its calculus and offer substantive financial relief in return to offset losses already suffered by statewide restrictions. Mikkelsen noted that as businesses close, the tax base also shrinks.

"Our businesses have been extremely responsible and have dutifully followed the state's Covid-19 guidance," said Hannigan. "They have successfully created some of the of the safest and most sanitary places for customers and employees to be. They should be open."

Speaking specifically about Florence and its reliance on tourism as an economic driver, Hannigan

added that tourism in western Lane County employs nearly 2,000 people, generating approximately \$147 million within the community each year.

"Restaurants are more than a job or a place to eat — they're an entire sector of what attracts thousands of people to Florence each

"Our businesses have been extremely responsible and have dutifully followed the state's Covid-19 guidance. They have successfully created some of the of the safest and most sanitary places for customers and employees to be. They should be open. ... If a small business dies, it impacts more than just the owner. It impacts employees and their families. It impacts the business's landlord and their family. It impacts the vendors the business owner buys from and their families.

— **Bettina Hannigan,**
President and CEO of the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce

year," Hannigan said. "Without them, a massive portion of our economy disappears. Take-out just isn't going to cut it."

The group pointed out that a recent Census Bureau polling illustrated that, even prior to the Thanksgiving "Freeze" order, that nearly 43 percent of small businesses in Oregon saw a drop in revenue in November. In addition, nearly 25 percent of those businesses expect they will need additional

financial assistance in the months ahead in order to recover from lost revenue.

In November, small businesses throughout the state reduced staffing and employment by just over 16 percent while 29.9 percent of Oregonians expect to lose their jobs in January — with unemployment benefits for

some 67,800 Oregonians set to expire the day after Christmas on Dec. 26.

"The state's remedies are anemic. There is little assurance for a small business owner with dropping revenues, depleting reserves and waning confidence. They need to be heard and they need to be served," said Mikkelsen, who pointed out that the distribution of \$20 million in small business grants last month by Business Oregon ran out in just

15 minutes due to oversubscription.

"Similarly, the \$55 million offered by Gov. Brown is inadequate to match the current devastation in the local business community as evident by the 1,600 Lane County small businesses that have applied for a morsel of the \$3.6 million given to Lane County for distribution," Mikkelsen warned. "We recognize that our elected representatives are being asked to balance competing forces carrying immeasurable impact on people's lives, livelihoods, safety and security."

In the letter, chamber presidents requested five specific actions from Brown and the legislature:

- 1) Provide a path for the safe reopening of all Oregon businesses who can comply and operate under recently released OR-OSHA Temporary COVID-19 Rules and Regulations
- 2) Provide for substantial remedies to local small businesses that have, through no fault of their own, been forced to shut down, leaving

employees out of work, and harming our local social and economic well-being

3) Dedicate \$75 million of state dollars toward a Hospitality Relief fund dedicated to helping our state's restaurants and hospitality businesses recover

4) Commit to a moratorium on new or increased taxes and fees at the state and local level. Directly or indirectly, these increase the cost of business, goods and services.

5) Provide for stabilization of the commercial rental market through a short-term tax credit for property owners that are willing to waive debt for commercial tenants that are behind on rent.

In their joint letter, chamber presidents expressed that they welcome the opportunity to work with the governor and legislature on a finding a balanced approach to find relief for local business and economic impacts on families and communities.

In closing, the letter stated, "We look to you for leadership and ask that these concerns be addressed with expedient and substantive measures in an effort to prevent an economic meltdown for the state's largest employer group — small business."

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either making arrests or working towards getting arrest warrants for the suspects involved."

Police arrested 20-year-old Ethan Joule of Eugene on Dec. 1 for unlawful use of a motor vehicle (UUMV) for a vehicle that had been reported stolen out of Eugene. It was during that

investigation officers that found evidence from several reported car break-ins and thefts reported from Florence-area residents.

Joule was arrested for the UUMV, three counts of unlawful entry into a motor vehicle (UEMV) and theft III.

Then, on Dec. 4, the FPD had received numerous reports of car break-ins and

two stolen cars. During the investigation, officers were able to identify and locate a suspect vehicle. The suspect vehicle was seized and, after obtaining a search warrant, was searched, revealing evidence from one of the stolen vehicles, several of the reported car break-ins and possession of controlled substances.

Evidence located in the

vehicle also connected the suspects to several car break-ins that were reported to the Lane County Sheriff's Office from residents outside Florence city limits. The investigation also revealed evidence of unlawful use of a credit card and identity theft.

The two stolen vehicles were recovered, along with other stolen property.

Florence Police identified four suspects who were traveling through Florence and had stayed at a local motel. One of the suspects was recently arrested in Linn County and is a suspect in similar incidents there as well.

The FPD is working with the Linn County Sheriff's Office and this investigation is continuing.

On Dec. 5, while on patrol, an FPD officer heard an audible car alarm going off and responded to the area to investigate. Meanwhile, officers conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle seen leaving that immediate area and, during the traffic stop, observed evidence of possession of controlled substances and unlawful possession of a firearm.

After their investigation, police seized a firearm and a restricted weapon, along with a large amount — over

4 ounces — of methamphetamine.

Florence Police arrested Ricky McNicol, 56, of Eugene, for unlawful possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of a firearm, carrying a concealed weapon, felon in possession of a firearm and two counts of felon in possession of a restricted weapon.

On Dec. 10, officers were investigating several additional reports of car break-ins and mail thefts. Police had identified possible suspects and a vehicle involved in those reports and eventually arrested Richard Olivera, 22, listed as a transient, on a felony warrant and seized his vehicle.

After a search of the vehicle, officers found evidence from several car break-ins and mail thefts. Olivera was arrested on six counts each of UEMV, criminal mischief and theft. Additionally, Olivera was charged with 20 counts of mail theft.

Evidence was also discovered that indicated theft of mail and theft from outside the city limits of Florence that was referred to the Lane County Sheriff's Office.

The investigation into this case is ongoing and an additional suspect has been identified.



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240 HOURS


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If an emergency happens in our community, it may take emergency workers some time to reach you. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 240 hours.

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- ☐ First aid kit an manual
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- ☐ Waterproof/windproof matches
- ☐ Water storage (1 gallon/person/day)
- ☐ Water purification tablets
- ☐ Non-Perishable Food
- ☐ Utility knife
- ☐ Emergency candles
- ☐ Extra eyeglasses and contact lenses
- ☐ Essential medications

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