

**HONOR from page 1A**

The show was produced by Frances Klippel and the Florence Bahá'í community. It presented a brief glimpse into the Black experience in Oregon and how national debates about race can impact life in Florence.

During the program, the current state of race relations was reflected in presentations by four individuals with unique perspectives on race in America.

The broadcast began with Florence resident Angela Apodaca reading from the letters of Leticia Carson, the only African American woman to receive land in Oregon through the Homestead Acts — a series of land grants that were offered from 1862- 1916 to offer free land to any adult who had never taken up arms against the United States during the Civil War. The 1866 Act specifically included Black Americans among those eligible to apply for land.

The letters were drawn from the archives of the New York Historical Center for Woman's History and the Oregon Black Pioneers Museum and are available to the public.

Carson's struggles to overcome the challenges of gender accep-

tance were poignantly read by Apodaca, who finished her segment of the show by reading a poem dedicated to her grandfather and ancestral lineage.

Next during the broadcast, coastal residents and siblings Robert Montgomery and Annis Cassells talked about "Enough: Say Their Names," a book they authored with a focus on the African American experience.

Montgomery said the book took shape after the unrest following the racial upheaval of last summer.

He discussed the seven authors that co-authored the book and encouraged listeners to check out the title online.

"This book was inspired and motivated after the death of George Floyd. ... There were seven of us that worked on this project and this book, in my opinion, represents those who have died," Montgomery said. "We are the ones left behind to make a change and a difference for our children

and our grandchildren. It was meant to be a starting place for people to have a difficult conversations, for people that want to be awake and understand what is going on and who want to take part in the change that is going on."

Cassells and Montgomery then read excerpts from the work, with both selecting poems written as tributes to civil rights icon U.S. Rep. John Lewis, "Good Trouble" and "Anthem of the People"

Lewis died in July 2020 after serving for 17 terms in the representing Georgia's 5th Congressional District. He was one of the most influential civil rights leaders of his time and continues to inspire social justice activists around the world.

Education is central to advancement and improvement within any culture, and this has certainly been one result of the racial tumult shaking America over the last year. The result has been more people than ever before becoming engaged in learning about our collective racial history.

All of the KXCR speakers, and the individuals who inspired them, counted on self-education and the education of others to improve their own conditions and, ultimately, the downtrodden.

Building on this, the program concluded with music as vocalist Maree Beers performed an a cappella version of "Lift every voice," a song written for Abraham Lincoln.

Beers shared her personal lineage, which is mixed, and spoke of her home and her affinity for music and song.

"I'm just a local Florence gal, and I take a lot of pride in my community here," she said. "I am

also a mother, a musician and I like to work with kids and theater."

Her stirring rendition was a fitting way to end the KXCR broadcast as "Lift every Voice" has been described, by Beers and others, as the "Black National Anthem."

Among its lyrics:  
*"Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us  
 Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us  
 Facing the rising sun of our new day begun  
 Let us march on till victory is won."*

Maya Angelou, who wrote some of the most critically acclaimed books on the Black experience, including "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" and "And Still I Rise," once said the goal was not to recognize one or another history as correct but to think about America in a much more integrated and united way.

"Won't it be wonderful when Black history and Native American history and Jewish history and all of U.S. history is taught from one book — Just U.S. history," Angelou wrote.

For more information about Black History Month, visit [www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov](http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov).



# 2021 STATE, FEDERAL TAX SEASON NOW OPEN

The Oregon Department of Revenue began processing state income tax returns on Feb. 12, the same day the IRS began processing federal returns. Although some taxpayers have already submitted their returns, processing doesn't start until the tax season officially begins.

Returns will be processed in the order they are received. However, as in years past, the department won't be issuing personal income tax refunds until after February 16. The fastest way for a taxpayer to get a refund is by e-filing. Taxpayers who e-file returns and request refunds via direct deposit receive their refund sooner, on average, than those who file paper returns and request refund checks.

A refund hold is part of the department's tax fraud prevention efforts and allows for confirmation that the amounts claimed on

tax returns match what employers report on Forms W-2 and 1099. Once we begin processing returns, filers can check Where's My Refund? to see the status of their refund.

As a result of COVID-19 stimulus payments, unemployment benefits, and federal tax law changes, there may be impacts to what taxpayers file on their Oregon income tax returns. Here are some important topics and information for Oregon personal income tax filers.

**STIMULUS PAYMENTS**  
 Economic Impact Payments received during 2020 and early 2021 may impact the amount of federal tax subtraction that can be claimed on the 2020 Oregon personal income tax return. The federal tax subtraction is based on the amount of federal tax you had to pay in the 2020 tax

year. Individuals should reduce the amount of federal tax paid in 2020 by the payments received to determine the amount of federal tax subtraction they are allowed. The federal tax subtraction is limited to \$6,950 (or \$3,475 if married filing separately).

**UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**  
 Unemployment benefits are taxable to Oregon. Funds received through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program are also taxable to Oregon. Unlike W-2 wages, unemployment benefits do not automatically have amounts withheld to pay taxes at the end of the year. Individuals who did not elect to have withholding on their unemployment may see an increased tax bill.

For individuals still receiving unemployment benefits in 2021, the department urges recipients

to submit Form 1040WH to the Oregon Employment Department to authorize withholding.

**OREGON WITHHOLDING**  
 The Department of Revenue has its own Form OR-W-4. Individuals should review their withholding to determine if changes are necessary for tax year 2021. A calculator is available to help ensure withholding amounts are correct.

**BUSINESS USE OF HOME**  
 Oregon is automatically tied to changes made to taxable income under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). Employees who receive a paycheck or a W-2 exclusively from an employer are not eligible for the business use of home deduction, even if they are currently working from home. Along with other changes, the TCJA suspended the use of employee business expens-

es for employees through 2025. Visit the IRS for more information on business use of home.

**DISASTER RELIEF**  
 The Department of Revenue recognizes not all individuals will be prepared to pay their taxes in full this year. The department is offering penalty waiver relief for individuals impacted by COVID-19, wildfires, or straight-line winds. To learn more, visit Revenue's tax relief options webpage.

**FREE-FILE**  
 All Oregon taxpayers preparing their own returns can file electronically at no cost using Oregon's free fillable forms. There are many free or low-cost preparation options available for both federal and Oregon tax returns. Some software companies offer free software use and e-filing for eligible taxpayers. Visit the

Department of Revenue website to take advantage of the software and free offers and get more information about free tax preparation services.

**REVENUE ONLINE**  
 The Department of Revenue continues to expand features available through Revenue Online. Individuals can view letters sent to them by the department, initiate appeals, make payments, and submit questions. Visit Revenue Online to learn more.

To get tax forms, check the status of your refund, or make payments, visit [www.oregon.gov/dor](http://www.oregon.gov/dor) or email [questions.dor@oregon.gov](mailto:questions.dor@oregon.gov). You can also call 800-356-4222 toll-free from an Oregon prefix (English or Spanish) or 503-378-4988 in Salem and outside Oregon. For TTY (hearing or speech impaired), we accept all relay calls.

# COVID-19 special enrollment health coverage period now open

SALEM—Feb. 15 was the first day of a COVID-19 special enrollment period, which lasts until May 15, 2021. This special enrollment period will allow people throughout the United States, including Oregonians, who are looking for health coverage to shop at HealthCare.gov.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant change to hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, who either lost their job or experienced a loss in income. As a result, these Oregonians may be newly eligible for financial help to purchase health insurance. Unlike a typical special enrollment period, this en-

rollment period is available to everyone, not just those who have experienced a life event.

Until May 15, any person who is eligible to shop through the Marketplace may enroll in new coverage or change their current plan.

Insurance agents and community partner organizations throughout the state are available to help people apply for financial assistance and choose private plans. People can also browse plans and find out how much savings they are eligible for at OregonHealthCare.gov/Window-Shop.

Oregonians who do

not get health insurance through their job or a program such as the Oregon Health Plan or Medicare may qualify for help paying for 2021 coverage through the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace. Even if people are temporarily uninsured or are currently enrolled in COBRA coverage, they can sign up for help to get health insurance for 2021.

"The pandemic has made life uncertain for many Oregonians. We want to help you find a way to control your finances," said Chiqui Flowers, administrator of the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace. "Quality health coverage protects

your financial future in the event that you get sick, injured, or something else unforeseen happens."

"It is true. The pandemic has proven that life is unpredictable. That can be scary when it comes to the health and financial security of your family," said Amy Coven, communications strategist for the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace. "Health coverage brings predictability to health needs that may arise, as well as a wealth of benefits to keep you healthy."

Individuals making \$51,040 or less per year, and families of four making \$104,800 or less, may

get help paying for coverage. In 2020, more than seven in 10 Oregonians who chose plans through HealthCare.gov got financial help for monthly premiums and out-of-pocket costs. These savings lowered the average premium to just \$145 per month.

To apply, go to OregonHealthCare.gov until May 15 and answer a few Oregon-specific questions to get to the right application. You can also search the "get help" directory on OregonHealthCare.gov to find an insurance agent or community partner organization to help complete the application and enroll. Insurance agents and

community partners provide local, one-on-one assistance at no charge to the client. This help is available virtually and over the phone, as well as in person following safety protocols.

The Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace, a part of state government, helps people get health insurance when they do not have job-based coverage, and do not qualify for the Oregon Health Plan or another program. The Marketplace is the state-level partner to HealthCare.gov, and a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS). For more information, go to OregonHealthCare.gov.

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BOTH MEETINGS ARE CURRENTLY ON HOLD. WATCH SUUSLAW NEWS FOR RESUMPTION

- Tuesday Evening Group (2nd Tuesday) 5-7 p.m. - Ichiban Chinese/Japanese Restaurant • Urologist Dr. Bryan Melhlhaff attends.
- Tuesday Lunch Group (3rd Tuesday) 12 noon - 1:00 p.m. - Ichiban Chinese/Japanese Restaurant • Urologist Dr. Roger McKimmy attends.

Contact Bob for more information:  
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