

White House approves Oregon emergency declaration

By MARK BRENNAN
FOR THE SENTINEL

President Donald Trump approved a major disaster declaration for the State of Oregon early Sunday in response to calls from Governor Kate Brown and a unified Oregon Congressional delegation to do so.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released a statement Sunday announcing the President's decision and the availability of federal emergency aid to support recovery efforts in the areas affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic.

The President's order, retroactive to Jan. 20, allows for the activation of FEMA'S Public Assistance program for reimbursements of emergency actions taken by state, territorial, tribal and local government entities, as well as certain nonprofits.

Governor Brown responded to the declaration positively but pointed to specific instances where additional aid has been requested from the federal government and to this point in time has not been forthcoming.

"This declaration is an important first step towards unlocking all available federal resources for Oregon's state, tribal and local response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I appreciate the responsiveness of Vice

President Pence and the federal administration officials to our requests for aid," Brown said. "However, this is far from everything Oregon needs from the federal government to actively and effectively combat this crisis. We have a number of significant requests pending with the federal government — first and foremost, Oregon's request for more personal protective equipment (PPE) from the nation's stockpile."

A general lack of PPE has been an issue faced by medical first responders across the state and the nation.

There are millions of PPE's on order but the availability of the most basic of the protections — masks and gowns — are still difficult to purchase given the worldwide need.

Brown also wanted to highlight issues that are not covered by the declaration.

"In addition, a significant part of our disaster declaration request was for individual assistance for all Oregon counties and tribes, including childcare assistance, crisis counseling, disaster case management, disaster legal services and disaster unemployment assistance for Oregonians. That request is still also pending and would provide significant relief



Oregon Governor Kate Brown speaks at a press conference following the announcement of the White House approving Oregon's declaration of a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus last week. The approval allows additional federal resources and economic support.

to Oregon families if approved."

Senator Ron Wyden was a signatory to a letter sent to President Trump last week by the Oregon Congressional delegation and reiterated his belief in an email to *The Sentinel* that the declaration was an important step in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, but much more remains to be done.

"The COVID-19 public health crisis has hit Oregon hard, and I am gratified the delegation's

bipartisan support of Gov. Kate Brown's state-wide disaster declaration was successful," Wyden said. "While I am glad this news means FEMA-related disaster relief is on the way to our state, I am determined to keep pulling out all the stops to access all suitable equipment from all sources to make sure working Oregonians, small businesses, health care providers, first responders and so many others get what they need in response to this global pandemic."

While party rancor continues on some level in state politics, as evidenced by last month's legislative debacle at the state house, there is a shared sense of purpose at the federal level according to Brown.

"This is an unprecedented public health crisis that demands a coordinated national response, backed by the full resources of the federal government. I will continue to work with the White House and Oregon's congressional dele-

gation to fight for access to every tool available to keep Oregonians safe from COVID-19," said Brown.

Michael F. O'Hare has been named as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected area.

The full text of Governor Brown's statement can be read at Oregon.gov as can her request to the administration for the declaration of emergency.



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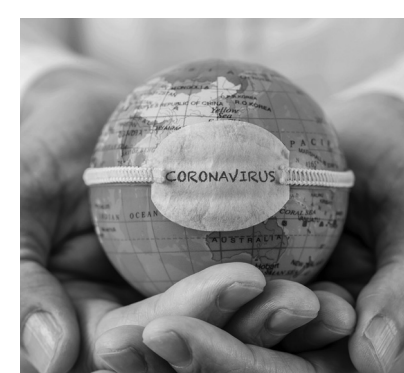
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