

# Oregon News

OREGON GOVERNOR DELIVERS STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

## Brown says economic growth gives Oregon a chance to improve health care, education, housing

By Andrew Selsky  
Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon needs to shore up health care, the environment, the education system and housing, Gov. Kate Brown said during her State of the State address Monday.

Speaking in the House of Representatives after she was sworn in, Brown said Oregon's unemployment rate is the lowest on record and has one of the fastest job growth rates in the country.

"With growth comes a lot of really good things. More jobs. More ideas. And hopefully, more opportunities," the Democrat said. "At the same time, not everyone is experiencing this prosperity."

Homelessness and spiraling rents must be tackled, Brown said, noting her proposed budget makes a historic \$400 million investment in housing. She also said a bill sponsored by House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, both Portland Democrats, is "innovative" and will give renters some peace of mind.

The bill prohibits a landlord from terminating month-to-month tenancy without cause after 12 months of occupancy, allows a landlord to terminate tenancy with 90 days' written notice and payment of one month's rent under certain conditions, and limits annual rent increase to 7 percent above annual changes in the consumer price index.

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— Oregon Gov. Kate Brown



House Republicans said they are "poised to resist harmful legislation, vigorously safeguard Oregonians' tax dollars, and protect their rights" during the 80th Oregon Legislative Assembly, which starts next week.

Democrats control the Legislature, with a three-fifths super majority in the House and Senate, giving them greater power to impose taxes.

In her address Brown also repeated her intent to end what she called the "wild, wild west" of campaign finance.

She was re-elected in November after the most expensive gubernatorial race in Oregon history. In the run-up to the finish, her campaign committee had received almost \$10.3 million in cash contributions while Republican candidate Knute Buehler's received \$13.2 million.

"No one should be able to buy a megaphone so loud that it drowns out all the other voices," Brown said.

At one point, a couple of people opposed to a proposed deep-water marine terminal on the Oregon coast where ships could load liquefied natural gas from a planned pipeline interrupted Brown's speech to shout a few words

before departing.

At another point, Brown thanked state employees and volunteers, including "first gentleman" Dan Little, who are working to keep federal facilities accessible during the partial federal government shutdown. Brown tweeted photos on Saturday of her husband, Little, after he cleaned toilets at Mt. Hood National Forest. Little sent the \$28 bill for disposing of the trash to President Donald Trump.

Brown's \$23.6 billion budget proposal for the next biennium aims to stabilize funding for the Oregon Health Plan, a free health coverage offered by the state for people who meet income and other requirements.

"Health care is a fundamental right," she declared.

Last year, a bill that would have asked Oregon voters asking if they want to enshrine health care as a right in the state Constitution died in a Senate committee.

"Let's work together to make sure every Oregonian has the health care they need," Brown said.

Noting that Oregon is experiencing drought and that last year was the warmest year in Oregon since 1895, with wildfires increasing, she said Oregon must re-

duce harmful emissions that contribute to global warming while building a clean energy economy.

After years of under-investment in education, Oregon will need additional funding to bring its schools back to a strong level, she said.

Brown has added a \$2 billion education investment package that's in addition to her base budget. Property tax limitations adopted in the early 1990s have resulted in decreased funding per student. The governor said in November when she presented her budget proposal that she expects the Legislature to reform Oregon's revenue system to adequately fund education.

"Our education system is in desperate need of repair, reform, and reinvestment," she said Monday. She pledged to work with lawmakers, the business community and others to properly fund public schools.

House Republicans said Brown's inaugural address offered recycled ideas.

"Rather than inspiring us with some innovative options, we were watching a re-run of past performances," said House Republican Leader Rep. Carl Wilson, of Grants Pass. "Oregonians need to know their governor is willing to make hard spending choices — not just continuing to ask for millions from Oregon taxpayers."

## Harassment prevention training canceled due to shutdown

By Andrew Selsky  
Associated Press

SALEM — The partial federal government shutdown reached the Oregon State Capitol on Tuesday, when training by a federal agency for lawmakers on workplace harassment prevention was canceled.

The cancellation happened as the state Capitol is grappling with sexual harassment. An investigation by the state Bureau of Labor and Industries, released on Jan. 3, concluded that top lawmakers haven't done enough to stop it.

Lawmakers learned about the training on Monday, just a day before the first scheduled session by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

A printed notice at a Capitol hearing room announced the cancellation. Notices also went out to lawmakers, who gathered in Salem this week to be sworn in and to undergo training.

"I'm very demoralized that the federal government wasn't able to come together and re-open the government," state Senate President Peter Courtney told a reporter in an email. "As soon as the federal government is back up and running we will reschedule this training."

An EEOC website says its training is geared to "focus on respect, acceptable workplace conduct, and the types of behaviors that contribute to a respectful and inclusive workplace."

Rescheduling will disrupt the 2019 session, which begins Jan. 22, but legislative leaders say it's a priority. "We will cancel committees, we will cancel floor session, we have to get this done," Courtney said.

Emphasizing what she sees as unequal treatment, Rep. Tina Kotek told fellow lawmakers after she was re-elected House speaker on Monday that they must work to end "the problem of poor capitol culture."

Sen. Jeff Kruse resigned last year after an independent investigation concluded he had inappropriately touched or talked to women, including at least two female senators and two interns.

Kruse told investigators his behavior was "instinctual" and hard to change. He later proclaimed his innocence when he announced his resignation.

Sen. Sara Gelsler, one of those senators, tweeted: "Irony is when the Oregon Legislature's new and improved workplace harassment training is canceled because of the Trump federal government shut down."

More than a dozen women have accused President Donald Trump of sexual misconduct, which he denies. In the 2005 "Access Hollywood" tape, Trump boasted of grabbing women by their genitals and kissing them without permission. Trump dismissed his comments as "locker-room talk."

The state labor bureau will pursue mediation over a civil rights complaint against the state Legislature for being lax in stemming sexual harassment. It will be overseen by a neutral mediator.

## Merkley, Wyden say feds should allow cannabis-containing foods

By Andrew Selsky  
Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon's two senators on Tuesday urged the head of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to update federal regulations to permit interstate commerce of food products containing a key non-psychoactive ingredient of cannabis.

The appeal by Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley came after Congress legalized the production and sale of industrial hemp and hemp derivatives, including cannabidiols, known as CBD. Wyden and Merkley had been behind a hemp provision that Congress passed and was included in the 2018 Farm Bill.

But after President Donald Trump signed the bill in December, FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb restated his agency's stance that CBD is a drug ingredient and therefore illegal to add to food or health products without his agency's approval. The FDA has sent warning letters to some companies making health claims for CBD.

In a letter to Gottlieb, the senators asked the FDA to update "outdated regulations" that prohibit food products containing CBD from being sold across state lines.

"Farmers in Oregon and



nationwide are poised to make real economic gains for their communities once these regulations are updated," they wrote. They said it was Congress' intent in the bill to ensure producers and consumers have access to hemp-derived products, including CBDs.

The Oregon Democrats asked the agency to clarify to the public several issues, including its authority in the production and marketing of hemp and its derivatives, and whether the FDA will consider issuing a regulation to allow hemp derivatives in food, beverages or dietary supplements that cross state lines.

CBD oils are increasingly popular in lotions, tinctures and foods. Proponents say CBD offers health benefits, including relieving pain and anxiety.

Scientists note there have been few comprehensive clinical studies on how CBD affects humans. Harvard Medical School said the strongest scientific evidence is for its effectiveness in treating childhood epilepsy syndromes which typically don't respond to anti-seizure medications. The FDA recently approved the first ever cannabis-derived medicine for these conditions which contains CBD.

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