

# Local & State

## Republicans in Oregon House won't delay votes on budget bills

■ GOP leaders say they won't require bills to be read in full, saving hours

By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon House Republicans said Tuesday, March 30, that they will not use delaying tactics on budget bills when they come up for a vote.

House Minority Leader Christine Drahan, R-Canby, issued a statement that the Republicans would drop their delaying strategy of requiring bills to be read in full when it came time to consider the budget legislation.

"Part of this commitment is to ensure we have a balanced budget prior to our constitutional deadline before adjourning this session," Drahan said.

Under the Oregon Constitution, the Legislature must adjourn no later than June 28. Budget bills are often among the last items to come before the Legislature as lawmakers wait until after a state revenue forecast in May.

The requirement to read bills in full is in the Oregon constitution, but traditionally it is waived and only the two-to-three sentence title of legislation is read out loud.

It takes two-thirds of the House — 40 votes — to override an objection to the waiver. Democrats have 37 seats.

While the tactic has been employed in prior sessions on specific pieces of controversial legislation, Drahan has used it on all bills. The pace of legislation in the House has become glacial.

The refusal to allow just the



The state Capitol in Salem.

title to be announced leads to marathon readings of bills that take hours.

On Tuesday, the House used a computer program to read the bills in place of the clerks. First up was a 170-page bill that changed the name of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission to the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission.

Drahan's statement on the budget bills is the first crack in Republicans' strategy.

Danny Moran, spokesman for House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said Tuesday the budget bill promise would not change the overall dynamics of House votes.

"House Republican leadership is still holding up critical funding for summer learning, child care, homeless shelters and wildfire recovery," Moran said.

Kotek said Monday that the slowdown could cause a pileup that would bump up against

the constitutional clock. Tuesday was the 70th day of the 160-day session that began Jan. 19.

"We do run into the challenge of getting bills to the Senate," Kotek said Monday. "It gets complicated."

The session ran into problems immediately after it started in January. The House recessed because of security concerns over Oregon State Police warnings of possible violent demonstrations timed to the inauguration of President Joseph Biden. No demonstrations occurred at that time.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature held remote hearings for much of the first two months. However, the constitution requires that lawmakers come to the Capitol for the final passage of bills.

Two cases of COVID-19 linked to floor activity briefly

shut the House over the past month.

In response to the slowdown, Kotek has scheduled day and evening sessions for every day this week.

The schedule brings the lawmakers to the Capitol, which has been closed since March 2020 because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The ZIP code where the Capitol is located has had the most cases of COVID-19 in the state.

Both sides blame the other for having to spend so much time in the Capitol. Republicans say that too much time is being spent on bills that aren't directly related to the COVID-19, economic slowdown and wildfire relief. An estimated 4,000 pieces of legislation have been introduced, the most in a decade.

"That would be too much in a normal year and this is not a normal year," said Andrew Fromm, spokesman for the House Republican Caucus.

Democrats want to address police reform, affordable housing, environmental initiatives, taxes, health care and gun control, along with other issues. They say Republicans are using a desperate tactic to force the will of a small minority onto the majority who say they were elected to pass the kind of legislation on the agenda.

So far, no lawmaker has tested positive, making Oregon one of only four states to have its Legislature virus-free over the past 13 months.

## Sheriff's Office team rescues man after his vehicle got stuck in snow

By Chris Collins  
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Members of the Baker County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team brought to safety a Washington man who spent Sunday night, March 28, in his vehicle after he got stuck in the snow on an unmaintained Forest Service road in the southern part of the county.

Chase Lewine, 29, of Seattle, became stuck in the snow after deciding to take the scenic route over Road 16 while out for a drive Sunday, Ashley McClay, Sheriff's Office spokeswoman, stated in a press release.

That road branches off from Highway 26 about 9 miles east of Unity, and follows East Camp Creek into the mountains.

Lewine had traveled about 5 miles on the snowy road when his 2000 Toyota 4-Runner four-wheel drive became stuck, McClay said. She said Lewine had been

driving on packed snow and got stuck while turning around to head back to Highway 26.

He then walked back to the highway and tried to flag down passing drivers. Patricia Chapin, 61, of Unity, stopped to talk to Lewine. She drove to an area with cell service and called 9-1-1 about 7 p.m. to report Lewine's situation, McClay said.

A short time later a Canyon City couple, Jessie Madden, 51, and Michael Madden, also met Lewine on Highway 26. The Maddens started driving up Road 16, making it about 3 miles and then deciding to walk the rest of the way to Lewine's vehicle. Lewine also walked back to his stranded SUV.

But before the group was able to try to return to the highway, high winds from a strong cold front felled several trees, blocking the escape route for Lewine's and the Maddens' vehicles. One tree fell near the Maddens' vehicle.

McClay said the Maddens walked back to the highway and called relatives who picked them up.

Lewine, meanwhile, chose to stay overnight with his vehicle.

The Baker County Search and Rescue Team was activated at 7:55 a.m. Monday, March 30, led by Sgt. Eric Colton. McClay said team members used a side-by-side all-terrain vehicle to travel to the area. They cut through the downed tree and other debris with chain saws to reach Lewine's vehicle.

"Despite the cold weather, Lewine was uninjured and appeared in good health," McClay stated in the press release.

The Sheriff's Department warns travelers to be prepared when heading out on Eastern Oregon roads this time of year. Despite rising temperatures, many unmaintained Forest Service and BLM roads remain impassable, McClay stated.

## CANCELED

Continued from Page 1A

Dukes said the crowds are one of the challenges to planning the Rally during the pandemic.

Under Oregon's current regulations, outdoor events in counties at the lowest risk — including Baker County — are limited to 300 people.

"We'd have way more than 300 people show up," Dukes said.

With no guarantee that Oregon Gov. Kate Brown will

rescind restrictions, or even relax them significantly, by July, when the Rally would have taken place, Dukes said it's not feasible to spend the time and money to plan the Rally when it might not be possible to put on the event at its usual scale.

"It takes five or six months to plan an event like this," he said. "What if it closes down again? We don't want to go there and not do a great job."

Dukes said he also recognizes the potential for people to become infected with the

virus during a big event.

"I don't want people to get sick," he said. "If someone gets sick they're going to point the finger back at us. I don't want to be that guy. (This) is the right thing to do."

Dukes said he intends for the Rally to return to Baker City in 2022.

"We absolutely still want to do it," he said.

Two other major July events in Baker City that were canceled in 2020 are still scheduled to happen

this year, according to their organizers — Miners Jubilee, July 16-18, and the Baker City Bull and Bronc Riding competition, July 16 and 17.

Shelly Cutler, executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, which organizes Miners Jubilee, said on Wednesday, March 31 that although she is disappointed that the Motorcycle Rally won't happen, she "completely understands where they are coming from" and that she supports the decision due to the uncertainty.

## One hurt in crash

By Chris Collins  
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Two vehicles sustained major front-end damage in a crash Tuesday morning, March 30, at 10th and Campbell streets that left one driver with a cut to the forehead and the other with a citation.

Angel De Arcos, 16, of Baker City, was cited on a charge of making a dangerous left turn in the incident that happened at 7:53 a.m. The teenager was driving a 2007 Cadillac sedan en route to Baker High School for classes, said Baker City Police Lt. Ty DUBY.

De Arcos was traveling east on Campbell Street with the sun in his eyes

and failed to see the other vehicle as he turned left onto 10th Street at the light, which was green for both drivers.

DUBY said the other vehicle, a 2010 Honda Civic, driven by Timothy Sheehy, 58, of Union was traveling west on Campbell Street when the crash happened. Sheehy sustained a cut on the head from a piece of plastic that flew off the air bag as it deployed in the crash, DUBY said.

The Baker City ambulance responded, but Sheehy refused medical care. De Arcos was not hurt in the crash and was able to drive his car from the scene. Sheehy's vehicle was towed.



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Ginger and Rick Rembold have between them donated about 200 pints of blood.

## BLOOD DRIVE

Continued from Page 1A

In the past, people were encouraged to mingle and visit while enjoying sandwiches and juice after donating. That's not happening now.

Evans said many donors Monday have had one or both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Donors don't need to wait to give blood after receiving a vaccine, so long as they feel healthy.

Red Cross officials from Boise, including collections manager Judy Knehans, made sure Monday's drive ran smoothly. Knehans lauded the organization's phlebotomists and staff.

"They're very dedicated," she said.

### Donors' stories

For Ginger and Rick Rembold of Baker City, donating blood has been part of their schedule for decades.

"I started in college, so probably in '72," Rick said. He said he started donating to help his friend's father, who was having surgery. Rick said that at that time, donating blood actually reduced the medical cost for someone undergoing surgery.

Ginger said she began donating regularly after her father died, as a way to honor him.

"He was a lifelong blood donor," Ginger said. Following Monday's drive, the Rembolds, who are both retired Baker School District teachers, have combined to donate more than 24 gallons of blood.

Ginger has donated 101 pints, Rick almost as many. "She's always one or two ahead of me," Rick said.

The Rembolds stick with their schedule whether they're home or not.

They have donated in New Mexico, Texas and Portland, among other places.

"Wherever we're at when the time comes," Rick said. Like the Rembolds, Doug Gaslin has been donating blood regularly for many years.

"I started out in the Portland area, (then) started giving here," Gaslin said during Monday's drive.

He said he has O+ blood, which is the universal type, able to be given even to people with other blood types.

Gaslin said he is up to about 20 pints donated.

Danny Story, on the other hand, donated his first pint on Monday.

He said his father, sister and wife — she's a nurse — have been donating blood for a long time.

"Honestly, I couldn't come up with a reason why I haven't been doing it," Story said.

Although his main purpose is to help with the blood supply, Story said he's also interested in finding out whether he was ever infected with COVID-19.

Evans said the Red Cross tests all donated blood for virus antibodies, and will give the information to donors who ask for it.

"I think I've had it but I don't know," Story said. He said his wife contracted the virus but he didn't get it from her, and he suspects he had been infected earlier and thus had protective antibodies.

"I think there's a reason why I didn't get it from her," Story said.

After making his first donation, Story was already making an appointment to give another pint during the next Baker City blood drive, set for June 14 at the Nazarene Church. Information is available by calling Evans at 541-523-5368.

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