

Small Business grants flowing to Oregon restaurant owners

By **PETER WONG**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Han Ly Hwang is one of almost 1,000 Oregon restaurant owners who shared a total of \$138 million from a Small Business Administration program spearheaded by U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Oregon restaurateurs.

He owns Kim Jong Grillin, a Korean barbecue restaurant in Southeast Portland.

He was among the 960 Oregon owners — of 38,000 nationwide — that got shares in the first round of the program totaling \$6 billion. SBA got more than 300,000 applications for the \$28.6 billion that Congress set aside for the program in President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan. The applications totaled \$69 billion.

Still, after Blumenauer

spent nearly a year crafting the program with help from Portland restaurateurs — and barely 60 days after Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan into law — Hwang got help from the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. The average grant was \$143,000.

"This is a complete game changer. For someone like myself, being a Korean American, this money gives me more of an opportunity to put my culture first and to really share it through the food," Hwang said Monday, May 17, during a conference call sponsored by Blumenauer.

"This is far from over, but how easy and smooth (Congress and SBA) transitioned this program from being in writing to actually being implemented is jaw-dropping. The help means the world to us. It

means that we're not alone, and we really appreciate that."

Hwang said the application process with SBA averaged about 20 minutes.

Blumenauer formally proposed the program in June 2020 at \$120 billion. After a near-miss with congressional pandemic legislation in December, he was able to secure \$28.6 billion for the program in Biden's recovery plan. The program accepted applications on a first-come, first-served basis, although amounts were reserved for women, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities. National chains are excluded from participation.

"This is a lifeline that is going to help restore them and move forward," Blumenauer said.

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— **Han Ly Hwang**, a grant recipient who owns Kim Jong Grillin, a Korean barbecue restaurant in Portland

intends to seek more money with the help of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Democrat from New York who joined the cause.

SBA had initial problems with other programs intended to help small businesses during the pandemic and subsequent economic downturn.

Some large businesses

benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program, which Congress created as part of the CARES Act last year, whose loans could be forgiven if businesses complied with ever-changing requirements. Some businesses, such as the Los Angeles Lakers professional basketball team, returned their money. Congress

and SBA attempted to fix flaws in subsequent rounds of the program.

The opposite happened earlier this year with the initial round of the Shuttered Venues Program, intended to help entertainment venues. But demand for the \$16 billion was so great that it crashed the computer system, forcing SBA to start over.

Blumenauer, on the eve of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund going live on May 3, said he was assured SBA was ready to register owners and accept applications.

"You being able to take on this new project, with the overwhelming number of applications received, I could not be more proud of what you and your team have done," Blumenauer said to SBA Administrator Isabel Guzman.

Guzman, who was confirmed by the Senate for her job on March 16, said she's happy that the first round of restaurant grants went smoothly.

"We want to make sure the message that gets out there is that the SBA is there to help," she said on the conference call. "The best thing we could do for small businesses is to help them get back to normal."



Warner Bros. Entertainment via AP

This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows LeBron James in a scene from "Space Jam: A New Legacy."

The blockbuster movie makes a comeback this summer

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

After more than a year of benching its biggest spectacles, Hollywood is ready to dazzle again.

From "F9" and "In the Heights" to "The Suicide Squad" and "Black Widow," there will be a steady stream of blockbusters populating multiplexes across the country for the first time since March 2020. For streaming-weary audiences, the promise of air conditioning, popcorn, soda fountains, 60-foot screens and state-of-the-art sound could be a welcome respite from the living room and virtual watch parties. Not to mention the ever-romantic concept of the shared experience.

For movie theaters, it's not a moment too soon.

The modern summer movie season, which runs from May through Labor Day, regularly accounts for over \$4 billion in revenue and makes up around 40% of the year's grosses. Last year, summer earnings were \$176 million, down 96% from 2019. Although theaters have been ramping up operations for a while, this summer will prove to be the biggest litmus test so far about whether habits have changed irrevocably during the pandemic.

In some ways, the calendar looks like a do-over of last summer. Many of the most anticipated releases were supposed to come out a year ago, including John Krasinski's "A Quiet Place Part II," up first on May 28, the big screen adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony-winning "In the Heights" (June 11), the ninth installment of the "Fast & Furious" series, "F9" (June 25),

Marvel's "Black Widow" (July 9) starring Scarlett Johansson, the Emily Blunt and Dwayne Johnson action adventure "Jungle Cruise" (July 30) and Nia DaCosta's "Candyman" reboot (Aug. 27).

"In the Heights" director Jon M. Chu had to convince Miranda that it was worth it to wait for a theatrical release. Miranda wanted to get his joyous musical about a bodega owner, Usnavi (Anthony Ramos) and his friends in Washington Heights out to people immediately. But Chu knows just how important a global release is for films with underrepresented casts. Like "Crazy Rich Asians," "In the Heights" features unknowns in key roles who are poised for a breakout given the right platform.

"We had big dreams for this," Chu said. "To be able to do it on the biggest scale possible meant so much."

And it's not the only blue-sky blockbuster in the bunch. The "Fast & Furious" series has always been about creating a fun theatrical experience and "F9" not only brings back a fan favorite — Sung Kang's Han — but also literally sends cars into space. It's expected to be one of the season's biggest hits.

"Whenever I get together with Vin (Diesel) and everybody to make these movies, we're not even talking about the plot or anything like that, but the feeling. I just remember as a kid in the summer saving enough money to go to the movies to share that experience with a bunch of strangers," said director Justin Lin. "When that moment hits and everyone's laughing or cheering together, it is magical."

Before the pandemic, going to the movies in the summer was a ritual. Audiences made up for last year by screening retro summer hits at drive-ins. Now it's a wild card whether the promise of an "event film" will motivate audiences back to theaters, especially if something is also available to watch at home.

"Space Jam: A New Legacy" director Malcolm D. Lee called his film, "The epitome of a popcorn movie." The sequel to the 1996 Michael Jordan pic finds LeBron James now sharing the screen with classic Looney Toons characters.

Those looking for a more R-rated experience can thank James Gunn, who made movie stars out of the once obscure "Guardians of the Galaxy," and now is out to do the same for the "misfit, Z-grade supervillains" of "The Suicide Squad." He had his pick of DC characters and turned down Superman for Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn, Idris Elba's Bloodsport and John Cena's Peacemaker.

Gunn looked to one of his favorite genres for inspiration: The 1960s war caper. Think, "The Dirty Dozen" and "Where Eagles Dare."

There are many other options too, including a host of big-name documentary titles, from Morgan Neville's "Roadrunner: A Film About Anthony Bourdain" (July 16) to Peter Jackson's "The Beatles: Get Back" (Aug. 27). There are family films, like "Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway" (June 18) and "Hotel Transylvania: Transformania" (July 23) and horrors like "The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It" (June 4), and "Don't Breathe 2" (Aug. 13).

AP fact check: Hyperbole from Biden, GOP on state of economy

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD**
Associated Press

Editor's Note: A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and House Republicans alike are revising history when asserting that the new administration set records in U.S. job creation — either the best ever or among the worst, depending on the vantage point. The truth is in between.

While jobs are steadily being added as the nation digs out from the coronavirus pandemic, the pace is far from being No. 1 among presidents, as Biden describes it. But neither is it the worst in decades, as Rep. Elise Stefanik, the newly elected no. 3 leader of House Republicans, asserted in recent days.

A look at the claims

Biden: "As a result of our prompt action to roll out the vaccine and boost the economy, we've gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We've gone from anemic job creation to a record of creation for more — for a new administration. None has ever created this many jobs in this timeframe." — *remarks Monday, May 17*

The Facts: Not so fast. He has created the most jobs in his first three months than any other president — about 1.5 million — but that's partly because the U.S. population is larger than in the past. When calculated as a percentage of the workforce, job growth under President Jimmy Carter increased more quickly from February through April 1977 than the same



Evan Vucci/Associated Press

President Joe Biden speaks with William "Bill" Ford, Jr., Executive Chairman, Ford Motor Company, left, as he tours the Ford Rouge EV Center, Tuesday, May 18, 2021, in Dearborn, Michigan.

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266,000 jobs were gained, far fewer than expected.

Stefanik: "In just over 100 days, we have an economic crisis ... we see the worst jobs report in over 20 years. Unemployment is up." — *remarks Friday, May 14*

The Facts: Stefanik, R-N.Y., is way off in asserting that last month's job report was the worst in decades. It showed job gains, just not as many as were expected. And her suggestion that Biden's first 100 days produced an economic crisis is baseless.

In April 2020, the country lost 20.5 million jobs after much of the economy shuttered due to the coronavirus pandemic. That was by far the worst monthly loss on record.

In last month's report, economists had predicted that about 1 million jobs would be added, compared with the actual 266,000 figure. Oxford Economics, a forecasting firm, called the miss in predictions for April "one of the largest on record."

That's clearly not the same as being the "worst jobs report," as she put it. In fact, companies have added jobs for four straight months, according to the Labor Department.

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