

Brown pushes social issues in final year as governor

BY PETER WONG

Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown called on lawmakers to approve more money for job training, lower-cost housing and child care in her final state of the state address Thursday, Feb. 3.

In her seven years as chief executive, Brown has governed during the 2020 Labor Day wildfires that devastated Oregon, racial justice protests and a coronavirus pandemic that sent the state's economy into a tailspin — but now is at near record-low unemployment.

"Too many Oregonians have struggled to find good-paying careers," she said, particularly the poor, people of color and rural residents who have not shared in the recovery. "Our economy is strong, and we must keep it humming. Most importantly, we have to make sure that every Oregonian feels it."

Brown renewed her call for \$200 million for Future Ready Oregon — a plan to target job training in health care, construction and manufacturing — plus \$400 million more for housing initiatives and \$100 million more for child care.

Although governors usu-

ally deliver state of the state addresses to a joint session of the Legislature or another live audience, the pandemic has forced Brown to do so virtually the past two years.

One more year

Brown was secretary of state when, seven years ago this month, she succeeded John Kitzhaber, who resigned under pressure amid an ethics scandal just 38 days into his fourth term. (There was a 12-year gap between his second and third terms). Brown is barred by term limits from running again this year; she will leave office Jan. 9, 2023.

"In my last year as governor, I view every day, every moment, as one more opportunity to focus on the big and bold work we still have to do for Oregon's working families," she said.

"I am dedicated to building a strong workforce for Oregon. I will bolster that workforce by providing access to child care so that parents can go to work knowing their kids are cared for. And I will marshal my colleagues to once again make a significant investment in affordable housing. These three



Dave Killen/The Oregonian, File

Oregon Governor Kate Brown spoke at a "Reopening Oregon" celebration at Providence Park on June 30, 2021. Gov. Brown gave her final state of the state address on Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022.

investments work together to ensure every working family can thrive."

She has called for spending of an unanticipated \$1.5 billion in tax collections generated by a strong economy. But she and legislative leaders have agreed to set aside \$500 million, mostly from federal pandemic recovery funds, to balance the 2023-25 budget. That budget will be put together mostly while Brown is still governor, although her successor will have until Feb. 1 to propose changes.

Brown also touched on the private accords, which she and her staff mediated between the

timber industry and environmental advocates to resolve disputes going back four decades over the fate of 10 million acres of Oregon's forests. Both sides agreed to protect sensitive species and create a habitat conservation plan. Brown has asked for \$35 million to start work on streamside habitat, plus \$121 million to sever the link between the Elliott State Forest and the Common School Fund, earnings from which are distributed to schools. The State Land Board seeks to transfer the south coast acreage to Oregon State University for a publicly owned research forest.

Pandemic affects popularity

Brown has the lowest popularity ratings of any of the nation's governors, although other recent Oregon governors such as Republican Vic Atiyeh and Democrats John Kitzhaber and Ted Kulongoski also saw sharp declines late in their second terms. One factor has been state coronavirus restrictions, which have drawn sharp public criticism and even Capitol protests. State police troopers turned away all but a handful of unmasked people who sought to enter the Capitol as the Legislature opened its 2022 session on Tuesday.

Brown lifted most of her executive orders on COVID on June 30. But her emergency authority remains in place, as does a requirement for wearing masks indoors.

More than 6,000 Oregonians have died of COVID-19. But Brown said it could have been far worse:

"Oregon has fared better than most," she said. "We remain third in the nation for lowest cumulative case counts. If our response to COVID matched that of the average state, more than 4,000 Oregonians wouldn't be with us today. We continue to be among the top states for getting shots in arms and administering boosters."

"And all three branches of government came together to get money to renters in need. In less than a year, we have helped more than 90,000 Oregonians stay safely in their homes."

"That's not to say it hasn't been hard. It has been utterly heartbreaking at times."

But Brown — who said last week she does not plan to endorse a candidate in the May 17 Democratic primary — had a closing message.

"To all the future governors of our state. To the elected leaders who will come next. To our future business and community leaders, and youth who will follow our footsteps. Let me leave you with this: find the opportunity, even in times of crisis. Especially in times of crisis."

"That's how we continue on this journey of transformational change for Oregon. That's how we pursue justice. That's how we heal divides and collaborate in ways that serve our state. That's how we honor this beautiful place we call home."

Nike co-founder donates \$250,000 to Betsy Johnson campaign

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

Nike co-founder Phil Knight threw his wallet into the 2022 political ring on Thursday, Feb. 3, giving \$250,000 to Betsy Johnson's campaign for governor.

Knight's contribution made the biggest splash into a growing pool of campaign cash for 2022 campaigns for governor. Fundraising for other campaigns falls under Oregon's open-ended financing laws that allow contributions of any size to candidates as long as they are reported to the Secretary of State.

The numbers so far are just a drop in a possible flood of cash. The 2018 race won by Gov. Kate Brown over Republican Knute Buehler, the former state representative from Bend, generated almost \$40 million in contributions.

Knight contributed \$2.5 million directly to Buehler's campaign. When Buehler left the Republican party and announced his endorsement of Johnson on Dec. 15, speculation grew whether Knight's financial support would follow.

Christine Drazan, the former House Republican leader from Canby who gave up her seat to run for governor, said fundraising is a constantly moving target depending on what opponents are receiving and the ability of some to self-finance their efforts.

During a Wednesday campaign stop in Madras, Drazan said she had no set goal beyond the \$1 million that she has raised so far.

"Whatever it takes, we will raise it," she said.

Fueling the raising and spending machines are the absence of an incumbent on the

ballot for the first time since 2010. Brown cannot run again because of term limits.

As of this week, the governor's race has attracted 31 candidates: 15 Republicans, 13 Democrats, two non-affiliated and one Independent.

That's not counting Democrat Nicholas Kristof, the ex-New York Times columnist who was knocked off the ballot when Secretary of State Shemia Fagan determined he didn't meet the residency requirement to run.

While Kristof's status is in limbo, his fundraising has continued non-stop. He's raised just over \$198,000 since Jan. 1.

Adding to the final money-spending binge is the likelihood of a three-way race in November between the winners of the Democratic and Republican primaries in

May, and Johnson, who can wait to see who survives the crowded field.

Under Oregon campaign law, she won't be on the ballot in the May primary. She must collect nearly 25,000 valid signatures of Oregon voters to submit to the secretary of state by the end of August. If the signatures are verified, she would go on the November general election ballot as an unaffiliated candidate.

Johnson leads the pack with just under \$3.58 million in the bank. Along with Knight's contribution, she also reported receiving \$100,000 on Wednesday, Feb. 2, from Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle.

In the Democratic primary field, former House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, has reported \$908,202 in the bank. Labor union political action committees were the biggest

givers so far in 2022, with \$50,000 from the PAC of the Laborers' International Union of North America and \$15,000 from the union-backed Oregonians to Maintain Community Standards, which lists its goal as ensuring a living wage for Oregon workers.

Kotek also received \$10,000 from the Portland operation of international digital marketing agency Moda Partners, whose main headquarters is in Nelson, British Columbia. Contributions of \$5,000 each came from Rick Dillon and Ron Odermott, Washington state residents who are executives with the Avemere Family of Companies, a Wilsonville-based operator of skilled nursing and senior living facilities.

Treasurer Tobias Read has \$478,178. Oregon does not require candidates to file fund-

raising and spending reports until 30 days after transactions. Read's 2022 information is limited to the first few days of the year. His largest recent contribution was \$10,000 from New York City investor Peter Joseph on Dec. 31 of last year.

Nick Kristof has just under \$1.88 million in the bank and reported recent major contributions of \$10,000 from Rice University lecturer Anne Chao and \$10,000 from Seattle-based Women in Sustainable Enterprise.

On the Republican side, Drazan has \$851,949 in the bank and has recent large contributions of \$150,000 from Team Management Co. in Keizer, \$30,000 from CPM Development Corp. in Spokane, and \$25,000 for Thomas Tuttle of San Francisco, a principal with Veritas Managed Solutions.

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