

# LOCAL, STATE & REGION

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

# Democrats weigh priorities, goals

BY NICK BUDNICK  
Portland Tribune

Democratic leaders on Monday said they hope for bipartisanship in the 2021 Oregon Legislature. But, they said, they won't let that goal hinder their desire to pass laws they consider crucial. During an online preview of the Oregon Legislature held by the City Club of Portland, Sen. Majority Leader Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, and House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, said Democrats' goals were forged by the pandemic, wildfires and the calls for racial justice in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

The agenda is "transformation through crisis," Smith Warner said, citing 2020's challenges. "How do we learn from them and use them as an opportunity to really make meaningful change?"

The answer, she and Wagner said, includes crafting a two-year budget for the state that will seek to address economic inequities and well as pass legislation that includes criminal justice, the environment and addressing affordability and gaps in the state's health care system.

Republicans who had been invited were not present at the event to challenge the Democrats' representations. The Pamplin Media Group, of which Portland Tribune is a part, is a media sponsor of the series, as is XRAY.FM. Tribune Managing Editor Dana Haynes moderated the forum.

During an introduction, City Club President Julie Davis said, "We had hoped for a bipartisan conversation and attempted to work with Republican leadership to find a time that fit their schedules, but they ultimately declined to participate."

Wagner and Smith Warner took



Gary A. Warner/Oregon Capital Bureau file

The House chamber in the state Capitol in Salem.

the time Republicans ceded by laying out Democratic Party priorities while faulting Republican positions taken last year, when Democratic efforts to pass climate legislation and mandatory vaccination were stymied by the Republican walkout.

The Democratic leaders also argued that, contrary to some Republicans' complaints, the Legislature's decision to limit the risk of COVID-19 by holding many meetings virtually won't affect the democratic nature of proceedings.

"It's actually going to be one of the most accessible legislative sessions ever," Smith Warner said. "Every Oregonian will have the opportunity to testify, to engage in bills without ever leaving their home, without having to get child care, without having to take time off of work."

For the first few months of the session, committees will hear from the public and work on legislation only in online meetings. Actual in-person voting by members is

expected to start in midsession, around April.

Asked how the Legislature this year could address challenges expected in years ahead, Wagner and Smith Warner pointed at legislation intended to address global warming and renewable electricity, among other things.

They said Democratic goals include boosting the construction of long-term affordable housing as well as short-term housing such as by purchasing motels and hotels to help give homeless people a place to stay.

They said their caucus has tried to help rural counties where Republicans predominate.

"So much of the cap-and-invest work was designed to create to be able to generate resources that then could be distributed to those communities that are most impacted," Smith Warner said. "It's our frontier counties out in Eastern Oregon that are having the results of years and years of drought. It is our timber counties (that saw

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— Barbara Smith Warner, House majority leader, on bipartisanship

wildfires) last year?"

Asked about the one bill that would most address racial justice and inequities, Wagner said he couldn't make that judgment. "We need to do the deep work of leaning in and asking communities of color what they need," he said.

Democrats enjoy lopsided majorities in the House and Senate that allow the party to approve revenue-raising measures without relying on Republican support.

In the past, to ensure a measure of bipartisanship, Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, at times sought to make sure Democratic bills had at least one Republican senator in support.

It's not clear that will happen in this session.

Asked about bipartisanship, Wagner said the two parties don't always agree on the role of government, so "I'm not sure that necessarily bipartisanship is the goal. I think the goal is focusing on what is the legislation that is needed for all Oregonians."

### TODAY

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 27, the 27th day of 2021. There are 338 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

- In **1756**, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria.
- In **1880**, Thomas Edison received a patent for his electric incandescent lamp.
- In **1901**, opera composer Giuseppe Verdi died in Milan, Italy, at age 87.
- In **1944**, during World War II, the Soviet Union announced the complete end of the deadly German siege of Leningrad, which had lasted for more than two years.
- In **1945**, during World War II, Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration camps Auschwitz and Birkenau in Poland.
- In **1967**, astronauts Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Edward H. White and Roger B. Chaffee died in a flash fire during a test aboard their Apollo spacecraft.
- In **1972**, "Queen of Gospel" Mahalia Jackson, 60, died in Evergreen Park, Illinois.
- In **1973**, the Vietnam peace accords were signed in Paris.
- In **1984**, singer Michael Jackson suffered serious burns to his scalp when pyrotechnics set his hair on fire during the filming of a Pepsi-Cola TV commercial at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.
- In **1998**, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, on NBC's "Today" show, charged the sexual misconduct allegations against her husband, President Bill Clinton, were the work of a "vast right-wing conspiracy."
- In **2006**, Western Union delivered its last telegram.
- In **2010**, Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the iPad tablet computer during a presentation in San Francisco. J.D. Salinger, the reclusive author of "The Catcher in the Rye," died in Cornish, New Hampshire, at age 91.

**Ten years ago:** Tens of thousands of Yemenis demanded their president step down; taking inspiration from Tunisians' revolt, they vowed to continue until their U.S.-backed government fell.

**Five years ago:** The Ferguson, Missouri, Police Department agreed to overhaul its policies, training and practices as part of a sweeping deal with the Justice Department following the 2014 fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown.

**One year ago:** China confirmed more than 2,700 cases of the new coronavirus with more than 80 deaths in that country; authorities postponed the end of the Lunar New Year holiday to keep the public at home. Senators faced increasing pressure to summon former national security adviser John Bolton to testify at President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, after a draft of Bolton's forthcoming book said Trump had wanted to withhold military aid from Ukraine until it helped investigate Democrat Joe Biden; Trump denied having said that to Bolton.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor James Cromwell is 81. Rock musician Nick Mason (Pink Floyd) is 77. Ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov is 73. Latin singer-songwriter Djavan is 72. Chief U.S. Justice John Roberts is 66. Actor Mimi Rogers is 65. Rock musician Janick Gers (Iron Maiden) is 64. Political and sports commentator Keith Olbermann is 62. Rock musician Gillian Gilbert is 60. Actor Bridget Fonda is 57. Actor Alan Cumming is 56. Rock singer Mike Patton is 53. Rapper Tricky is 53. Actor-comedian Patton Oswalt is 52. Actor Josh Randall is 49. Country singer Kevin Denney is 43. Tennis player Marat Safin is 41. Rock musician Matt Sanchez (American Authors) is 35. Actor Braeden Lemasters is 25.

— The Associated Press

# HOW HAVE YOUR PLANS CHANGED?

Help us better understand...

Please help us by taking this online survey to determine what's most important to you now. What do you plan to buy and shop for in the coming days and weeks?

Your answers will help us navigate through these unprecedented times. None of the responses will be shared or used for any other purpose except to help us better serve our community.

**Everyone who completes the survey will be able to enter a contest to win \$1,000 as our way of saying "thank you" for your time.**

The survey is available at:  
[www.pulsepoll.com](http://www.pulsepoll.com)

