

The Bulletin

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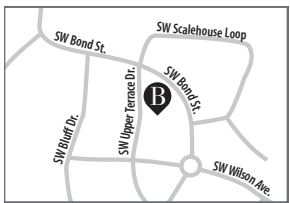
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Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

DESCHUTES COUNTY New COVID-19 cases per day

SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, DESCHUTES COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES, BULLETIN GRAPHIC

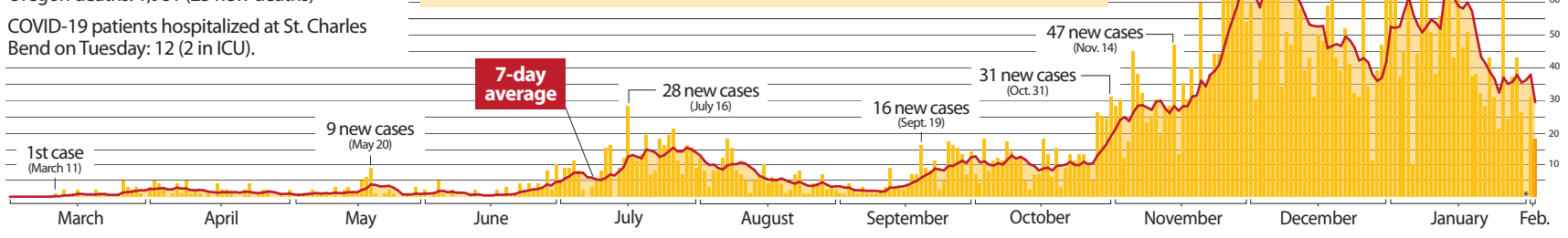
COVID-19 data for Tuesday, Feb. 2:
Deschutes County cases: 5,450 (18 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 45 (zero new deaths)
Crook County cases: 695 (3 new cases)
Crook County deaths: 15 (zero new deaths)
Jefferson County cases: 1,782 (5 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 25 (zero new deaths)
Oregon cases: 143,978 (619 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 1,981 (23 new deaths)
COVID-19 patients hospitalized at St. Charles Bend on Tuesday: 12 (2 in ICU).

LOCAL VACCINATIONS

22,435

Number of vaccinations given by St. Charles Health System

What is COVID-19? It's an infection caused by a new coronavirus. Symptoms include fever, coughing and shortness of breath. This virus can be fatal.
7 ways to help limit its spread: 1. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 2. Avoid touching your face. 3. Avoid close contact with sick people. 4. Stay home. 5. In public, stay 6 feet from others and wear a mask. 6. Cough into your elbow. 7. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Modeling shows Oregon now gaining upper hand on virus

BY KALEB LAY

SALEM — New pandemic modeling from the Oregon Health Authority, the Centre for Mathematical Modeling of Infectious Diseases and others indicates COVID-19 is on the decline across Oregon and could continue to taper off into the coming months, returning to levels not seen in months.

The OHA, mathematical modeling center, COVID Act Now and the Institute for Health Modeling and Evaluation all place the rate of COVID-19 transmission in Oregon below 1.0 in their most recent models, indicating each new case of the disease on average results in fewer than one subsequent new case. The highest estimated rate of transmission was 0.85 by the Institute for Health Modeling, while the lowest was 0.69 by the mathematical modeling center.

The Oregon Health Authority's modeling, published Thursday, puts the rate of transmission as of that day at 0.81. Projections of what could happen if that rate remains constant into the coming weeks found that Oregon could average just 420 new cases of COVID-19 and 13 new hospitalizations each day by Feb. 16.

For context, Oregon has not consistently reported daily new COVID-19 cases at that level since late October, before daily new infections jumped into the thousands in mid-November, leading to the "two-week freeze" and subsequently to



Kaleb Lay/La Grande Observer

A cloth face mask dangles Monday on a bush in downtown La Grande.

the risk and protection framework, under which many counties have been locked in the "extreme risk" category ever since.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, which in previous models had projected that Oregon's COVID-19 death toll would reach 5,011 by April 1, now projects a "most likely" scenario in which the state death toll stands at 2,499 on May 1.

With the state's death toll at 1,930, the 569 additional projected deaths in the coming three months would represent a significant decline in fatalities from recent months. In

December, for example, 565 people died from COVID-19 in Oregon, along with 483 in January as of the 30th, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

But the models also contain no shortage of reminders that the state of the pandemic — and any projected recovery from the winter surge that may eventually come true — is precarious.

The OHA, for example, projected what could happen if the rate of transmission increases 30%, to 1.1. In that situation, average new daily cases would reach 720 with 24 new hospitalizations per day.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Inmate's estate to sue sheriff's office

The estate of Scott Douglas Baksis, whose recent death in the Deschutes County jail was ruled a suicide, intends to sue the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

According to a notice of intent to sue filed recently with the county legal department, Baksis' estate intends to bring claims of wrongful death and civil rights violations for "failing to adequately monitor Mr. Baksis, provide him with appropriate psychiatric treatment and counseling, and or place him on suicide watch, among other potential violations."

Baksis, 31, died at St. Charles Bend on Dec. 6, three days after being found unresponsive in his cell in the Deschutes County jail. He was awaiting trial for charges of felony DUII and driving with a suspended license.

The criminal investigation into the death concluded Baksis hung himself with a towel tied to his bunk, Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel announced last week. He was being housed alone in a cell as part of a 5-day COVID-19 observation period for new arrivals at the jail.

Baksis' estate has retained Bend civil attorney Brian Dretke and John Coletti of Portland.

The sheriff's office would not comment Tuesday. "The sheriff's office does not comment on pending litigation," said sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Jayson Janes.

Bentz named to U.S. House Judiciary Committee

Freshman Rep. U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, has been named to the House Judiciary Committee. It's the second assignment for Bentz, who earlier was named to the House Natural Resources Committee.

The panel deals with legislation on a sweeping list of legal issues: anti-trust, civil rights, constitutional law, immigration, intellectual property and terrorism.

Bentz, a 1977 graduate of the

Lewis & Clark Law School, will bring his experience as an attorney and his tenure in both houses of the Oregon Legislature to the committee.

Bentz replaced long-time Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, as representative of Oregon's 2nd Congressional District. Walden retired at the end of the last session.

Oregon's 2nd Congressional District is one of the largest by size in Congress, covering nearly 70,000 square miles in Eastern, Central and Southern Oregon.

— Bulletin wire reports

Oregon could face \$1.6 billion budget shortfall

BY HILLARY BORRUD

The Oregonian

Oregon could face a \$1.6 billion shortfall in the next two-year budget due to immense unanticipated spending on pandemic and wildfire recovery and a slowdown in tax revenue growth.

Less than two months ago, legislative analysts pegged the dollar figure for a status quo 2021-23 budget at \$25.6 billion. They predicted the state would be \$793 million short of general fund and lottery dollars needed to balance that budget.

Then, lawmakers approved \$800 million in additional COVID-19 response and wildfire recovery spending, including to aid to tenants and landlords, during a one-day special session in December. That brought the potential budget gap for the next two-year cycle to \$1.6 billion.

Rep. Dan Rayfield, a Corvallis Democrat who is a co-chair of the Ways and Means committee, said in a news briefing with House Speaker Tina Kotek on Monday that legislative committees will soon begin working on proposals for how state agencies could absorb budget cuts of 5% to 7%, if that turns out to be necessary.

Even as Oregon lawmakers spent more than anticipated last year in response to the pandemic and historically large wildfires, the state's tax revenues grew more slowly than expected. Still, income tax revenue remained stronger than some leaders initially worried it might be in the early months of the pandemic. Lawmakers will get a better picture of the revenue outlook at forecasts on Feb. 24 and May 19.

Kotek, a Democrat from Portland, recalled how the forecast for tax and lottery revenues shot up \$2 billion in September, surprising many and taking some of the short-term fiscal pressure off lawmakers.

Therefore, she wants to wait on the additional forecasts this month and in the spring before making budget decisions, she said.

Rayfield said video lottery closures due to the pandemic cost the state tens of millions of dollars a week in lost revenue. He also noted that a new law that voters approved in November contributes to the budget gap by redirecting roughly \$100 million in recreational marijuana tax revenue from public schools to "addiction recovery centers" and drug treatment and related services.

To balance the 2021-23 budget, Rayfield said he expects lawmakers will need to use a combination of cuts to government services, tapping savings accounts and assistance from the federal government. He noted one state reserve account is known as the rainy day fund and "I would most certainly say that it's raining."



Taylor Towery and the team at The Bulletin have been knowledgeable, attentive to our needs and delivered successful print and digital campaigns. We will continue to use them as we grow our business and expand throughout Oregon and look to them for advertising guidance. Thank you for your continued professionalism and kindness.

Very Sincerely,

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