

Lawmakers consider extending fish screen tax credit

Lawmakers are considering whether to extend a tax credit for Oregon farmers who install fish screens on their irrigation intakes, which expires next year.

Under Senate Bill 172, the tax credit — which covers 50 percent of installation costs up to \$5,000 — would expire in 2024 instead of 2018.

Screens are intended to prevent fish from getting

sucked into irrigation systems and killed.

Lawmakers consider consolidating marijuana regulation

State legislators are moving toward consolidating the state's medical and recreational marijuana industries into one regulatory system.

The co-chairwomen of the Joint Committee on Marijuana Regulation have dropped several bills that

would move regulation of medical marijuana from the Oregon Health Authority to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the regulatory agency for recreational sales of the drug. Another proposal would establish a separate agency specifically for cannabis regulation.

OHA has regulated the medical marijuana program since it was created through Ballot Measure 67 in 1998. When voters legalized recreational cannabis use with Measure 91 in 2014, regulation of the new program was assigned to the liquor commission, while the health au-

thority retained its oversight of the medical program.

Bill seeks reversal of Oregon GMO preemption

Biotech critics are calling on Oregon lawmakers to overturn a prohibition against local government restrictions on genetically engineered crops because statewide regulations haven't been enacted.

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed a law that preempted cities and counties from setting their own rules over seeds, which blocked most local ordinances banning genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

Groups that opposed the preemption bill say state inaction since then has justified the passage of House Bill 2469, which would carve out an exemption allowing local GMO regulations.

Public employees blast proposed PERS reforms

In a demonstration of the fraught political territory lawmakers enter when they scrutinize the state's public pension system, firefighters, nurses, and teachers Monday testified against two Oregon Senate bills aimed at reducing the costs of that system.

The bills, both sponsored by Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, are the latest round in the Legislature's seemingly perennial battle with the costs of PERS, the unfunded liability of which has been estimated to be at least \$21.8 billion.

Senate Bill 559 would require that retirement benefits be calculated using the average salary from the final five years of employment, instead

of the current three years.

Senate Bill 560 would take the 6 percent of salary employees contribute, or have contributed on their behalf, to a defined contribution plan called the Individual Account Program and redirect it to their retirement benefits. The bill also caps the amount of salary used in benefits calculations at \$100,000.

Legislators seek to control prescription drug price hikes

Backers say state legislation proposed this month would go further than any other state to control the price of prescription drugs to patients and insurers.

A bill by Rep. Rob Nosse, D-Portland, would cap patients' out-of-pocket copayment for prescriptions, require pharmaceutical companies to explain steep increases in the cost of a medication and mandate rebates when prices exceed a certain threshold.

Three other bills by Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward would take similar steps but also require pharmaceutical companies to include the average wholesale price of a drug in any type of direct consumer advertising.

Bill would prohibit state union, contractor campaign contributions

Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, has proposed a law to prohibit state contractors and public unions from contributing to political campaigns.

The legislation has a companion bill that would require

bidder on state contracts to disclose their five greatest campaign contributions in the state.

Buehler was scheduled to drop the legislation Monday, the same day an opinion piece in Forbes Magazine by Illinois-based conservative activist Adam Andrzejewski claimed that Gov. Kate Brown and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum have received more than \$800,000 combined in campaign contributions from more than 200 state contractors.

Buehler, who is a rumored candidate for the 2018 gubernatorial race, tweeted out a link to the opinion piece Monday when he announced he had introduced the legislation.

Bill would prevent employers from recovering attorney fees in wage disputes

Oregon employers would be stripped of the ability to recoup attorney fees if they win a wage and hour lawsuit under a proposed bill before state lawmakers, while another would allow claimants to file liens on their employer's property before winning a judgment.

Only employees who file and win such cases would be entitled to attorney fees under House Bill 2169, which is being considered by the House Committee on Business and Labor. Currently, either workers or employers can recover such costs if they win legal disputes over wage and hour claims.

Under House Bill 2180, workers who file a complaint over unpaid wages can file a lien against their employer's property.

Similarly, under House Bill 2181, if a worker is fired within 90 days of filing a wage claim, the employer faces the "rebuttable presumption" that the termination was intended as retaliation.

February is **Teen Dating VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**

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Grant County Victim Assistance Program 541-575-4026

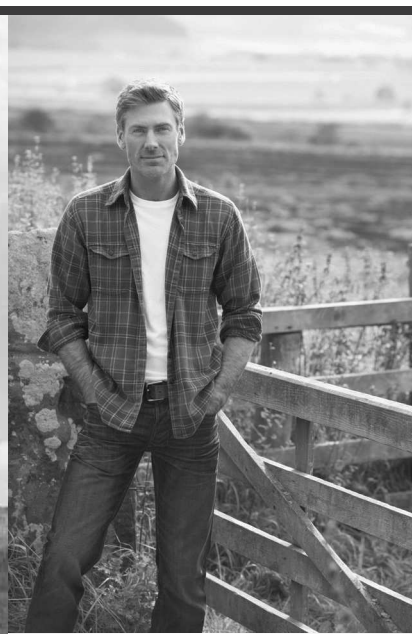
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