

Tax filing deadline extended to July 15

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregonians now have until July 15 to file and pay their 2019 state personal or business income taxes. But any quarterly payments for 2020 still will be due April 15.

The IRS previously extended its deadline to July 15 for filing personal and corporate federal tax returns, paying those taxes, contributing to an IRA for 2019 and making the first quarterly estimated tax payment for 2020. However, for those who make quarterly payments, the "second" payment for 2020 still is due on June 15.

Oregon is not going quite as far. The changes announced Wednesday afternoon by the Oregon Department of Revenue include:

- Oregon personal income tax returns and payments for 2019 are now due July 15.

- For corporate income and excise taxpayers, the deadline for filing returns and payments is extended from May 15 to July 15. Returns due after May 15 do not have extended deadlines.

- The extensions are automatic. Taxpayers do not need to apply for them.

- Any interest and penalties under the extended Oregon tax filings and payments will start accruing on July 16.

- Deadlines for other taxes are not extended. Business groups and some legislators have called for a delay in the new corporate activity tax.

In its announcement, the department said the extensions were because "the governor's state-de-

clared emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the action of the IRS will impair the ability of Oregon taxpayers to take certain actions within the time prescribed by law."

"The governor's clearly stated goal is for Oregon families to stay home, save lives," said department Director Nia Ray, echoing Gov. Kate Brown's tagline for social distancing. "After consultation with the state treasurer and state budget officials, the Department of Revenue will extend personal and corporate income tax deadlines during this challenging period."

The tax payment extension could create up to a \$1.5 billion cash-flow problem for the state budget, said Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, co-chair of the Legislature's Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response.

"That's a huge cash-flow problem, which probably takes many of the items we want to help with off the table, I'm afraid," he said during the committee meeting Tuesday.

His comments drew a strong response from Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend.

"Cash flow problems, really? The government just shut down about 90 percent of our businesses in the state of Oregon, who now have massive cash-flow problems. And the whole reason to delay the filing and payment is for them to be able to catch up," Knopp said.

"So for the government to, at this point, claim poverty or to claim cash-flow problems after what they've done to business, quite frankly just seems incredibly hypocritical."

Knopp said the deadline should be delayed so businesses could recover and

have sufficient cash-flow to pay their taxes. Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, agreed and added, "I can tell you right now businesses across the state are laying off."

The committee also discussed whether to delay implementation of the new corporate activity tax as part of proposals to help businesses and individuals.

Rep. Janelle Bynum, D-Happy Valley, urged the state government to stay disciplined: "That means we find out who's in trouble and who's not. I don't want people who are doing just fine to hide behind those of us who really are struggling."

Bynum, who co-owns several fast food restaurants in the Portland area, added that she probably wouldn't have the cash to pay all her taxes.

"I'm one of those businesses that looks like it has

a lot of money," she said, "but it goes out faster than I can keep it. But I'd rather be upfront about what is happening in my business, so that whatever help I need, I know what to ask for."

Separately on Wednesday, the state Department of Consumer and Business Services issued a temporary emergency order requiring insurance companies to extend grace periods for premium payments, postpone policy cancellations and non-renewals and extend deadlines for reporting claims.

"Many of our insurers have already stepped up and done the right thing," Insurance Commissioner Andrew Stolfi said Wednesday. "This order will ensure every Oregonian who needs it has relief from these insurance policy terms, giving them a measure of security and stability."

More cases, self-serve gas, federal money and more: A roundup of coronavirus developments in Oregon

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon has experienced 690 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since January, as of Tuesday morning.

The 84 new cases announced by the Oregon Health Authority were led by 18 each in Marion and Washington counties.

Washington County has had the most cases, 168, followed by Marion with 123. Eighteen Oregonians have died from the disease, all over the age of 60.

The state reported on Sunday that 140 patients had been hospitalized for COVID-19, but 291 adult ICU beds were available, as were 67 pediatric ICU beds.

In a video posted Saturday, Gov. Kate Brown said the latest modeling shows that Oregon is unlikely to run out of available hospital beds if people practice social distancing.

Passenger traffic at Portland International Airport is down 90%, and ridership on TriMet is down about 80%.

"These are the kind of metrics that indicate we are reducing the transmission of the virus," Brown said.

Here's a round-up of other coronavirus news:

- Self-serve gas: Oregon Fire Marshal Jim Walker temporarily suspended the state's ban on self-serve gas. His office produced a handy flier for service stations to post for customers who don't know how to fuel their vehicles.

Service stations neither are required to offer self-serve nor, under some circumstances, are they required to have any attendant present.

For years, Oregon and New Jersey have been the only states disallowing self-service, but Oregon gradually has been easing restrictions, especially in rural areas.

Oregon politicians had differing reactions to the news.



Gov. Kate Brown details steps Oregon is taking to limit the spread of COVID-19 at a press conference in Portland on March 12.

"Personally, I think the best solution is to have the customer run their own card and let the attendant pump the gas, thereby limiting the number of different people touching the pump," Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, wrote in his daily constituent update.

"This is preposterous. Gas pump handles could become breeding grounds for virus," tweeted Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton.

Consumer Reports offers these tips on self-protection while pumping gas: Consider carrying disposable nitrile or latex gloves to use when gripping the pump handle. Or use paper towels to grip the handle and to touch the keypads. When done, invert the gloves and throw them away, along with any paper towels, etc., that you've used. Use hand sanitizer before getting back into the vehicle.

"Cleaning your hands after you're done seems like the quickest, easiest precaution. But some drivers might want to have disinfectant wipes handy for wiping down the gas pump handle and the payment keypad before pumping,"

Consumer Reports said.

- "Stay Home, Stay Alive": The governor's social distancing campaign launched Saturday with the Portland-based ad agency Wieden+Kennedy producing the ads for free.

They include slogans such as "Don't accidentally kill someone," "Keep Portland alive" (instead of "weird") and "Essential workers, as you stay outside for us, we will stay at home for you. Thank you."

- Online charter schools: Colt Gill, director of the Oregon Education Department, clarified that online education may continue.

Virtual public charter schools were included in the school closure that Brown ordered through April 28. However, the Education Department also said schools that offered online education, or were capable of doing so, could keep operating if there was no in-person contact.

All Oregon schools have been ordered to provide "supplemental" education — informal or review materials for students — whereas the closed schools in Washington state have been told

to resume teaching students, although not in person.

For Oregon online charter schools, it pretty much can be business as usual, Gill said. But they may not

enroll new students until Brown reopens schools.

- Trump signs aid: Oregon Rep. Greg Walden joined President Donald Trump at the White House signing ceremony for the \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package that Congress passed last week.

"I was proud to help write and pass the rescue package and to stand next to the President when he signed it into law," Walden wrote in a newsletter. "This package is not the first response to the COVID-19 pandemic, nor will it be the last."

- Getting to Capitol Hill: Oregon Rep. Peter DeFazio flew back to Washington, D.C., on Thursday night to vote for passage of the coronavirus response on Friday. He said his Alaska Airlines flight had four passengers with four or five flight attendants.

- Special session: Sen. Dembrow said it was too early to tell when Gov. Brown might convene a special legislative session.

State government will receive a hefty amount of money from the congressional aid package.

"Until we have a better understanding of the gaps in the federal legislation, we won't know exactly what is needed in a special session," Dembrow wrote in a constituent update. "The Governor is committed to calling us into session only when (a) we know exactly what financial assistance is needed from the state and (b) it is clear that any actions taken are supported by both the Democratic and Republican caucuses."

"Another reason for her reluctance to call us into session is that our state budget outlook is not yet clear."

Some legislators have said a special session might not be necessary. In a disaster, Brown has widespread authority to move money around in the state budget and to take certain other actions without legislative approval.

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Grant SWCD Weed Control Dept.

Working for You in 2020

Thanks to the Grant County Court and Northeast Oregon Forests Resource Advisory Committee, Grant Weed Control is able to offer a **25% Cost share program for Noxious Weed Control on Private Grazing Lands**, through a Title II funded Grant Project. This program will provide a maximum \$5,000 of noxious weed control services with a \$1,250 maximum landowner contribution to qualifying participants. To be eligible for participation, the treatment property must not be actively irrigated and must be primarily managed for livestock grazing, minimum of 20 acres in size, located within Grant County, and must contain priority noxious weed species. Applications for this limited weed control assistance opportunity will be ranked and funded according to a priority noxious weed list.

Contact the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District Office at (541) 575-1554 or visit 721 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845 for applications and additional information.

This application deadline for this program is April 10th, 2020.

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