

Oregon needs massive infusion of COVID-19 vaccine to meet Biden's goal

Current priority groups wouldn't match presidential deadline until July 1

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon would need up to double the doses of COVID-19 vaccine it currently receives to fulfill President Joe Biden's seven-week sprint to allow all adults to be offered inoculation, Oregon health officials said Friday.

Gov. Kate Brown and top state medical experts held a press call Friday to say they hoped to meet Biden's timeline, but would move cautiously.

Brown said she welcomed Biden's "audacious announcement."

"I will do everything I can to make it happen," Brown said.

Oregon's current staggered priority groups wouldn't match Biden's deadline until July 1.

States have the central authority over public health, and Brown said the present plan would stay in place until there was a guaranteed supply before she would unleash additional demand onto the already strained system.

Oregon officials were only recently told they would receive 200,000 doses per month, up from the previous 120,000 doses.

Asked how much more vaccine Oregon would need to meet Biden's



EOMG file photo

Kerry Gillette, a physician assistant with Mosaic Medical, fills syringes with the Moderna vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Bethlehem Inn in Bend on Feb. 19.

schedule, Allen said it would "require a doubling of those doses."

"It would need to be an increase on that kind of order of magnitude," Allen said. "Maybe 300,000."

Part of the math problem has to do with the vaccines themselves. Until recently, Oregon was only receiving the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, each of which requires two shots given about a month apart.

The state has received the initial shipments of a new vaccine from Johnson & Johnson that requires a single shot.

Brown and Allen both said their caution came from not wanting to set off the kind of policy whiplash that hit Oregonians in mid-January.

When the Trump Administration announced the immediate release of a large stockpile of additional doses, Brown dropped her carefully crafted priority tier policy. She announced everyone in Oregon age 65 and over would be eligible for shots.

Trump officials said within 48 hours that there was no stockpile of new doses.

"This is a deception on a national scale," Brown said at the time.

The governor had to reverse herself and put eligibility restrictions back in place.

Biden said Thursday that he wanted the nation far enough along in its vaccination program to allow for small celebrations of July 4.

"If we all do our part, this country will be vaccinated soon, our economy will be on the mend, our kids will be back in school, and we'll have proven once again that this country can do anything," Biden said.

Though Oregon officials have a much higher level of confidence in Biden's streamlined transport system and increased manufacturing of vaccine, Allen said supply needed to be on the way first.

"We know the previous administration made previous announcements it was unable to fill," Allen said.

Oregon is currently limiting shots to health workers, residents of nursing homes, educators and daycare workers and, most recently, all residents age 65 and older as of March 1.

The next eligible group can seek shots March 29. It's a long list that includes adults age 45 and older with specific medical issues, agricultural and other food processing workers, homeless people, residents of low-income housing, those displaced by last year's wildfires and wildland firefighters.

Pregnant women age 16 and over were recently added to the group.

OHA has not been able to give estimates on how many people will become eligible on March 29.

May 1 — the date that Biden wants eligibility to be offered to all adults nationwide — is currently listed as adding front-line workers (those who deal daily with the public), those living

in multigenerational households and those age 16-44 with certain medical conditions.

Brown's plan calls for everyone age 45 and older to be eligible on June 1. On July 1, all adults would be able to seek shots.

Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state's top infectious expert, said officials were looking at studies from around the country about school reopenings. Some indicate Oregon's mandate for students to be spaced 6 feet apart when they return to the classroom could be cut to 3 feet. No policy change is currently in the pipeline, despite requests to Brown from school districts.

Allen said the vaccination effort involving seniors was going well statewide, though he noted some counties — such as Deschutes — were ahead of the goal to have 75% percent of eligible seniors inoculated, while other counties lagged behind.

Brown praised the support of Oregon's congressional delegation for Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus legislation, which includes \$1,400 direct payments to Americans, aid for COVID-19 distribution, unemployment aid and funds to buttress state and local budgets strained by the pandemic.

Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, joined all House Republicans in opposing the bill, saying it was too expensive and included too much non-pandemic related spending. The rest of Oregon's congressional delegation — all Democrats — supported the bill.

All Oregon Democrats join to back Biden pandemic plan

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau



U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz

President Joe Biden signed his \$1.9 trillion pandemic recovery plan, which won final approval on Wednesday with the support of Oregon's four Democrats and opposition from its lone Republican in the U.S. House.

In descending order, the largest shares go toward economic stimulus payments to individuals, aid to state and local governments, extensions of unemployment benefits, childcare and other aid to families, reopening schools and COVID-19 vaccinations and other health care.

Biden signed the bill on Thursday, ahead of a nationally televised speech on the anniversary of the pandemic.

Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader of Canby, one of only two Democrats to oppose the initial version on Feb. 27, joined all but one Democrat to support it on the final 220-211 vote.

Reps. Suzanne Bonamici of Beaverton, Earl Blumenauer of Portland and Peter DeFazio of Springfield voted yes on both versions of HR 1913. Republican Rep. Cliff Bentz of Ontario voted no.

port to providers.

Her statement:

"The American Rescue Plan will help the people of northwest Oregon, including many who have reached out to me during this past year. It will help the senior citizen in Seaside who needs a vaccine but doesn't have access to the Internet. It will help the new mom and her husband, both paramedics, who don't have access to paid family leave and can't afford childcare. It will help restaurants like a beloved Portland eatery that has been shut down for months but could finally reopen thanks to the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

"It will help school leaders in districts big and small who want to bring students back to classrooms but don't have the funding to do so safely. It will help the arts industry worker in Portland who has relied on

unemployment benefits since last June and can't afford to lose them now. I've fought hard for this aid based on these and so many other compelling stories, and am grateful the American Rescue Plan will now become law."

The bill, which runs to more than 600 pages, includes \$25 billion Blumenauer has sought for nearly a year to help independent restaurants.

His statement:

"This is historic legislation dealing with priorities long neglected. The impact of this legislation says it all. Republicans, with their more than trillion-dollar tax cut, primarily for people who didn't need it, versus our priorities, which will make a major impact on child poverty, deal with public health and help our local governments survive. This is a reflection of Democratic values and the difference it makes is stark.

"I am proud to vote in favor of the rescue plan. I am proud of what it is going to do for people who need it most. And the contrast between Democratic priorities and what the Republicans did when they used budget reconciliation could not be starker. I encourage President Biden to sign this legislation into law as

soon as possible, so we can get help to Oregonians right away."

Schrader switches

Schrader had opposed the first version, but the revised plan further narrows who qualifies for \$1,400-per-person stimulus checks on top of the \$600-per-person payments included in year-end legislation. The final plan sets income limits of \$75,000 per person and \$150,000 per couple for the full \$1,400 payments. The payments phase out at \$80,000 and \$160,000.

Neither DeFazio nor Bentz issued statements on their websites.

House Republicans criticized the plan as wasteful, and their campaign arm — seeking

to target DeFazio and Schrader in 2022 — labeled it "a socialist giveaway."

Bonamici's staff also offered an Oregon-specific breakdown of the plan's \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments. Based on the calculations of a House committee — and 2020 data — state governments will get \$2.6 billion; metro area cities, \$438 million; other cities, \$243 million; and counties, \$818 million. Federally recognized tribes will draw shares of a \$20 billion national fund.

There will be two payments, one about 60 days after Biden signs the bill, the other one a year from now.

Metro area cities are defined as those with populations of at least 50,000. They will get their

money directly from the U.S. Treasury upon filing a certificate of need. In descending order, they are Portland, Salem, Eugene, Gresham, Hillsboro, Beaverton, Bend, Medford, Springfield, Corvallis, Albany and Tigard.

Counties also will get their shares directly from the Treasury, based on population.

Other smaller cities will get their money through state government. Unlike the CARES Act last year, when cities and counties protested lawmakers' decision simply to reimburse them for pandemic-related expenses, the money will be distributed according to population, and state officials will have no discretion over how it is allocated.

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Morrow County Public Works Projects - Morrow County, Oregon

Morrow County, Oregon, requests proposals for a qualified Fire Consultant to provide services for Morrow County Parks. Contractors submitting qualifications shall be considered based upon the following general evaluation criteria:

1. Fee schedule.
2. Experience.
3. Method of approach.

Copies of the Request for Qualifications may be obtained from Morrow County

Public Works, P.O. Box 428, 365 W Hwy 74, Lexington, Oregon 97839, (541) 989-9500, spointer@co.morrow.or.us

Complete proposals will be accepted at the same address no later than 4:00 p.m., March 4, 2021. Any questions or concerns may be addressed to Sandi Pointer.



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