

# Poll: Oregonians split on Greater Idaho

By Dylan Jefferies  
EO Media Group

Imagine Bend being Oregon’s east-most city, a short drive from Redmond, Idaho.

“Greater Idaho,” the concept of transferring parts of Southern and Eastern Oregon to Idaho — making Redmond, Idaho, a reality — is gaining traction in some rural areas.

The idea is a very long shot — moving the state borders would require the approval of the Oregon and Idaho legislatures, as well as Congress.

According to Mike McCarter, the chief petitioner of Move Oregon’s Border, a nonprofit advocating for Greater Idaho, the change would give rural Oregon counties a longed-for Republican-led legislature by leaving liberal strongholds like Portland and Eugene — and even Bend and Sisters — behind in Oregon.

In May, voters in Baker, Grant, Lake, Malheur and Sherman counties approved ballot initiatives that require county officials to study joining Idaho. Union and Jefferson counties passed similar initiatives in November of 2020.

Despite those initiatives, a slim majority of Oregonians do not think rural Oregon counties should be able to leave Oregon and join Idaho even with voter approval. And two-thirds of Oregonians think it is unlikely that the move will occur.

That’s according to recent polling from the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, which asked respondents if they think Idaho absorbing Eastern and Southern Oregon would be positive or negative, if they think it is likely to happen and whether or not it should be allowed with voter approval.

The center conducted the statewide survey of 1,400 Oregon residents, selected to be demographically representative of the state, between June 8



The Greater Idaho concept.

and June 14. The margin of error ranges from 1.6% to 2.6% per question.

### Survey responses

Survey responses reveal a deep rift between Oregonians on the issue.

According to Clackamas County resident Patti Shanek, the move would promote separatism, discourage political discourse and raise the cost of living for rural residents.

“The main tax base comes from primarily Democrat counties,” she said. “If the red counties became part of Idaho, those forming the new Idaho would have an increasingly high cost of living and limited access to state programs.”

But according to Deschutes County resident Amanda Wallace, the move would give rural Oregon conservatives political power they currently lack in Oregon’s legislature.

“Conservatives don’t feel like their voices are heard in Oregon, nor do they feel like their vote counts,” she said.

“Sadly, Portland, Salem and Eugene make all of the decisions.” Some respondents who oppose the move cited concerns that breaking up the state would discourage a diversity of opinions, setting a dangerous precedent for other states.

“This sets a precedent for reshaping other states along color lines and harming the health of our democracy,” said Multnomah County resident Margarette Puckette. Many argued that unsatisfied Oregonians already have the option of moving to Idaho.

“If members of these counties want to become part of Idaho, then let them

move there,” said Marion County resident Janis Sabatula. “Why mess with state borders that have been there for more than 160 years?”

Supporters and opponents of the move raised concerns that being a part of Idaho would entail higher state taxes and a loss of significant tax dollars from Western Oregon and its metropolitan counties, plus a loss of revenue and jobs from Oregon’s booming cannabis industry, which remains illegal in Idaho.

Some opponents expressed sympathy for residents of rural counties who feel underrepresented.

“The rural counties feel underrepresented at the state level, and technically they’re right,” said Clackamas County resident Hendy Appleton. “But a diversity of views and values is important.”

### Polling highlights

Overall, 38% of Oregonians believe Southern and Eastern Oregon should be able to join Idaho with voter approval, and 34% believe the move would be positive.

Among Oregonians living outside of Portland and the Willamette Valley, 44% support counties being able to join Idaho with voter approval, while only 37% of residents living in the greater Portland area support counties’ ability to do so.

Oregonians older than 75 are the most likely to say that Southern and Eastern Oregon counties joining Idaho would be negative (55%), and respondents ages 45 to 54 are the most likely to say the move would be positive (40%).

More than half of Oregonians with six-figure incomes believe the move would be negative, while some 40% of people with lower incomes believe it would be negative.

Compared to urban and suburban residents, rural residents are the most likely to say voters should be able to

approve a county’s move to Idaho (43%), and that a move to Idaho is likely (32%) and would be positive (40%).

The survey also used aggregated data to analyze the opinions of Black, Indigenous and other Oregonians of color compared to the opinions of white residents, with this clarification: “BIPOC residents are not a monolith; the grouping represents a wide diversity of races and ethnicities.”

According to the survey, Oregonians of color are more likely than white Oregonians to say that counties should be able to join Idaho with voter approval (42%) that it is likely (32%) and that it would be positive (36%).

### Move Oregon’s Border

According to McCarter, chief petitioner of Move Oregon’s Border, a key takeaway from the poll is that no clear majority is in favor or opposition to the Greater Idaho concept, because about one-fifth of respondents expressed no opinion.

Another takeaway, McCarter said, is that many respondents expressed unfamiliarity with the idea. He is confident that, as rural voters become more informed, they will lean in favor, as was seen during May elections when an average of 62% of voters across five counties voted in favor of Greater Idaho initiatives.

“As citizens of Eastern and Southern Oregon, we ask that northwestern Oregonians make a decision based on what’s best for their part of the state, and leave it to us to make a decision based on what’s best for our part of the state,” he said in a press release. “The election results from our part of the state indicate that we prefer to join Idaho.”

“We are asking northwestern Oregonians to examine the benefits to northwestern Oregon of voluntarily letting this territory go,” he said.

## Oregon OSHA adopts emergency rule to protect farmworkers from extreme heat

By Sierra Dawn McClain  
EO Media Group

Oregon OSHA on Thursday adopted an emergency rule related to employees working in extreme heat.

The rule, which comes after a record-setting heat wave that led to one farmworker’s death, is intended to protect workers from heat-related death and illness.

The temporary rule is effective immediately and will stay in place for 180 days, or until a permanent rule replaces it. The rule applies not only to farms but to any workplace, indoors or outdoors, where weather could lead to potential heat dangers for workers.

“This rule creates greater clarity for employers about the specific steps that need to be taken to protect workers from heat stress dangers at work,” Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA, said in a statement. “For employees, it further crystallizes their existing rights to protection from heat hazards where they work.”

The new rule will make the following changes to workplaces.

**When the heat index is equal to or above 80 degrees Fahrenheit, employers are required to provide:**

- Access to sufficient shade (specifics below).
- An adequate supply of drinking water (specifics below).

**When the heat index rises above 90 degrees, all of the rules for 80 degrees apply and, in addition, employers must:**

- Ensure effective communication between an employee and a supervisor is maintained so the employee can report concerns.
- Ensure that employees are observed for alertness and signs and symptoms of heat illness and monitored to determine whether medical attention is necessary.
- Provide a cool-down rest period in the shade of 10 minutes for every two hours of work. These preventive cool-down rest periods may be provided concurrently with any other meal or rest period required by policy, rule or law.
- Develop and implement an emergency medical plan and practices to gradually adapt employees to working in the heat.

### Access to shade

- To be sufficient, shade must:
  - Be provided by any natural or artificial means that does not expose employees to unsafe or unhealthy conditions and that does not deter or discourage access or use.
  - Either be open to the air or provide mechanical ventilation for cooling.
  - At least accommodate the number of employees on recovery

or rest periods, so that they can sit in the shade.

- Be located as close as practical to the areas where employees are working.

- Shade present during meal periods must be large enough to accommodate the number of employees on the meal period that remain onsite.

### Drinking water

To qualify as an adequate supply of drinking water, it must:

- Be readily accessible to employees at all times and at no cost.
- Enable each employee to consume 32 ounces per hour.
- Be cool (66-77 degrees) or cold (35-65 degrees).
- Drinking water packaged as a consumer product and electrolyte-replenishing drinks that do not contain caffeine (for example, sports drinks) are acceptable substitutes, but should not completely replace the required water.

- Employers must also ensure that employees have ample opportunity to drink water.

All of the above requirements are effective immediately. One requirement, however, does not need to be met until Aug. 1: training.

### Training required

No later than Aug. 1, employers must ensure that all employees, including new employees, supervisory and non-supervisory employees, are trained in the following topics, in a language readily understood, before they begin work in a heat index equal to or in excess of 80 degrees:

- The environmental and personal risk factors for heat illness, as well as the added burden of heat load on the body caused by exertion, clothing and personal protective equipment.

## What went wrong? Few answers as ‘terrifying’ heat slays 116

By Zane Sparling  
Pamplin Media Group

The Oregon State Medical Examiner released another stark tally of those who perished during the historic heat wave last month.

New state figures show at least 116 people succumbed to the harsh heat and sun that bore down on the Pacific Northwest from June 25 to June 28.

At its peak, temperatures reached a record-shattering 116 degrees in the Portland metro area.

The new tally provided by the Oregon State Police on July 7 provides no identifying details beyond the age, gender and county of residence of those who died — a stark listing of demographics that offers few hints of the human tragedy that unfolded.

A majority of the deaths — 72 — occurred in Multnomah County, 12 were reported in Clackamas County and nine in Washington

County. Marion County, which hosts the state’s Capitol as well as numerous agricultural areas, reported 13 deaths. Two deaths each were reported in Deschutes and Columbia counties, plus three in Linn County.

One death each was reported in Umatilla and Polk counties.

Most of the people who died from the heat were over the age of 60, and the vast majority were men. In the latest count, 82 of the deceased were identified as men, compared with 34 identified as women.

At least three of those who died were in their 90s, 12 were in their 80s, 28 were in their 70s, 43 were in their 60s, 20 were in their 50s, eight were in their 40s and two were in their 30s.

Officials in the state’s most populous county, which also bore the brunt of the loss of life, have settled in for a lengthy review of the mass casualty event.

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