

Gov. Brown pushes business tax to support public schools

By PETER WONG
OREGON CAPITAL BUREAU



AP Photo/Sarah Zimmerman, File
Gov. Kate Brown speaks with the media at the Oregon Capitol in Salem in 2019.

Gov. Kate Brown says she will not recommend a suspension of Oregon's new corporate activity tax, contrary to what groups, such as the Portland Business Alliance have asked her to do.

Brown made the statement April 22 in an hourlong video conference arranged by the alliance, which says more than 1,000 people listened in.

The governor and her chief of staff, Nik Blosser, also outlined their emerging plans for restarting public life and business activity that have been frozen by the coronavirus pandemic. As Brown spoke last week, the Oregon Health Authority announced 57 new cases for a total of 2,059; the death toll remained at 78. On Tuesday, that toll had risen to 2,385 cases and 99 deaths.

Brown responded to a comment from Craig Smith, lobbyist for Food Northwest, formerly known as Northwest Food Processors Association. Businesses have organized in an attempt

to persuade the governor and Legislature to suspend the tax for six months. Smith said a suspension would allow some businesses to retain money for cash flows while their activity is curtailed or shut down.

The new tax was approved by the 2019 Legislature to raise a projected \$1.175 billion to pay for school program improvements under the Student Success Act. Quarterly reports are due April 30, July 31, Oct. 31 and Jan. 31.

Brown said she will ask the Department of Revenue not to penalize businesses

for filing such reports late. She also said that businesses with less than \$1 million in Oregon commercial activity already are exempt from the tax, proceeds from which go into an earmarked fund.

"We are not talking about your local pizza shop, corner store or your barber," she said.

Public schools, which get the lion's share of their operating money from the state budget, have been closed since mid-March and will remain closed through June.

"We know that closure of schools due to COVID-19 is going to affect chil-

dren across the state. They are missing out on weeks of learning, even as our schools and our teachers are moving mountains to implement distance learning," Brown said.

"The investment we make now in our schools via the Student Success Act will help our state's children recover and get us back on track for the future of Oregon."

Only the Legislature can suspend a tax, and lawmakers are unlikely to meet in a special session before the state's next quarterly economic and revenue forecast on May 20.

Pending forecast

Brown said the numbers are still being developed. But she said the state budget will be affected by the economic downturn — the number of unemployment claims filed in the past four weeks are more than double the 147,000 net jobs lost during the most recent recession in 2007-10 — and the resulting decline in personal and corporate income taxes, which account for more than 90% of Oregon's general-fund state budget.

Brown also said that in addition to the usual increased demands on some services, such as state-supported health care for low-income people, the downturn has resulted in new staff expenses for the Employment Department and Oregon Health Authority and technology for state employees to enable them to work from home.

"We are going to face some difficult budget decisions in the coming months as those bills come due and our state revenues adjust to the new economic reality unfolding before us," she said.

"But our normal tools (for cost-cutting) are not particularly helpful right now," such as a hiring freeze.

The governor can order an across-the-board cut in most state agency budgets, but the limit is 2%.

Brown has joined governors across the country, Democrats and Republicans, urging Congress to approve aid to states and local governments. Congress did not do so in its latest \$484 billion coronavirus aid package — most will go to small

businesses and hospitals, but \$25 billion will go toward virus testing — but the issue is likely to resurface in discussions about the next aid package.

Not business as usual

Brown and Blosser discussed elements of their emerging plan for reopening public life and business activity.

Blosser said he hoped elements of the draft, which is being worked on by groups focused on specific industry sectors, would be made public by May 4.

Among the groups: Restaurants, which have been limited to takeout and delivery services since Brown issued an executive order March 16; retailers, personal-care services and outdoor activities, all affected by Brown's March 23 order for Oregonians to stay at home. Some businesses deemed essential, such as grocery stores and gas stations, were allowed to remain open.

Large-scale gatherings in churches, concerts and sports arenas are likely to be last to resume.

COVID-19 Medical Advisory Panel helps governor make decisions

By DICK HUGHES
FOR THE OREGON CAPITAL BUREAU



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
A sign on the door of the laboratory at Interpath Laboratory advises that personal protective equipment is required. The governor's medical advisory council is providing expertise on testing and other components of the state's COVID-19 response.

When Dr. Bruce Goldberg encountered a difficult case as a family physician, he would gather a bunch of smart consultants in the room for their advice on how to help the patient.

That, he said, is what Gov. Kate Brown has done in creating her COVID-19 Medical Advisory Panel. She credited the panel with helping her decision last week to let hospitals, clinics and other health providers resume nonurgent medical procedures on May 1 under certain guidelines.

Brown first convened the panel on April 7. It has been meeting by Zoom videoconference two or three times a week. Goldberg and the other seven members come from urban and rural Oregon and represent front-line health providers, hospitals, academia and government.

"She charged us with helping the state and her identify blind spots that we would all need to be aware of as we face this pandemic together, and also developing strategies for how to

battle this pandemic," said Goldberg, a former head of the Oregon Health Authority and now a professor of health policy.

Goldberg said there is consensus in Oregon and nationally on the critical steps in fighting COVID-19 while awaiting development of an effective vaccine: personal protective equipment for front-line workers, testing people for the coronavirus, adequate health care resources and social distancing and other measures.

But each state is different. Oregon is more rural than many states. As far as big cities, Goldberg said, "Portland as a metropolitan area is really different from New York City in that we don't have the type of crowded mass transit systems. We don't have the plethora of tall high-rises and people living in really tight quarters.

"I think every community is different and has to be looked at through that lens," he said.

Because COVID-19 is

a new disease, scientists, health care providers and policymakers learn more about its symptoms, spread and treatment every day. During the medical advisory panel's meetings, members discuss the latest data and other information, provide perspectives from front-line health workers and offer input on policies.

Dr. Dana Hargunani, chief medical officer for the Oregon Health Authority, said: "It's in part topics that are brought forward for input. And it's in part, what are the hot topics that the group is hearing from the front lines and in the rest of the community that we may not be thinking about on a state level, and how do we make sure we think about and respond to those?"

That came into play in discussing whether nonurgent medical and dental procedures should resume.

"If we relax the policy, then how can that be instituted in the hospitals and what does that mean for some of the other impacts like PPE (personal protective equipment) and staffing

and allowing people to travel outside their homes, which relates back to policy," said Dr. Renee Edwards, chief medical officer at Oregon Health & Science University. "We are an advisory panel. Her team listens, collates our thoughts, clarifies things but ultimate authority absolutely is with the governor."

As of Monday, nearly 52,000 Oregonians had been tested for the novel coronavirus. One focus for the advisory panel is how to expand testing and then trace those who have come in contact with the infected individuals.

"How do we understand the community prevalence? How do we understand how when one person gets sick, how many more people they might spread it to, so that we can get a better handle on our contact tracing, which then helps us contain the disease spread?" Edwards said.

Oregon's social distancing and other restrictions have held down the rate of transmission compared with many states, but Edwards said COVID-19 will be with us for a long time, so a balance must be found between

protecting public health and resuming public life.

"We have to get to a place where we relieve some of the restrictions such that our economy can function and we can all function all as a society," she said. "But we have to realize that when we relieve some of those restrictions, that's going to result in some increasing spread of the infection, which is going to mean some people getting sick and some people dying."

Dr. Bob Dannenhof, the public health officer in Douglas County, said Brown has given Oregonians the appropriate directions: Stay home if you possibly can, and definitely if you are sick. Maintain social distances to avoid transmission of the virus. Wash your hands frequently.

And pay attention to your mental health.

"This is a tough, tough time. This is a health crisis, an economic crisis and a social crisis," he said. "Sleep well, do fun things, get some exercise and don't worry about stuff that really doesn't make a difference."

CRYPTOQUIP

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

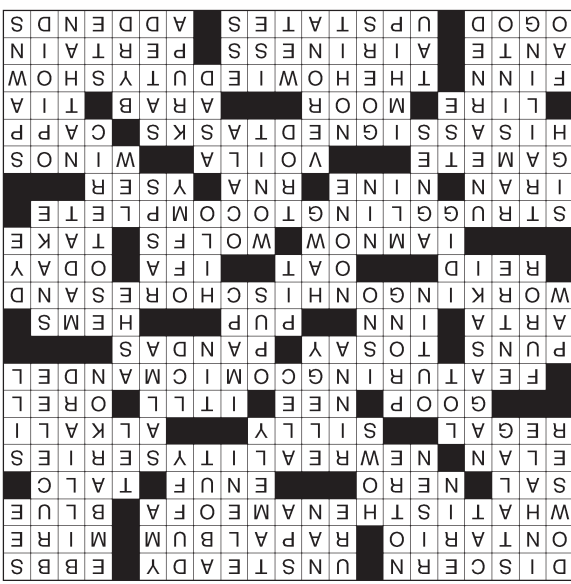
Clue: H equals W

HMAO EHR FANIAOEF IGNE HGTF,
W FSIIRFA EMAT RSQME ER FWOQ

"LGOQF LRN EMA PPRNWF.

When two serpents part ways,
I suppose they ought to sing
"Fangs for the Memories."

ANSWER Cryptoquip



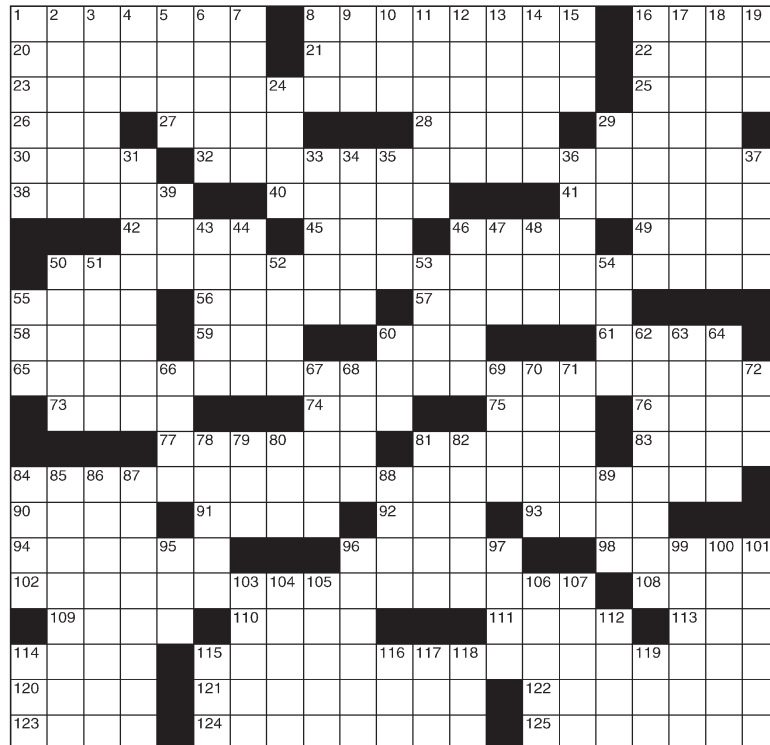
ANSWERS

Super Crossword

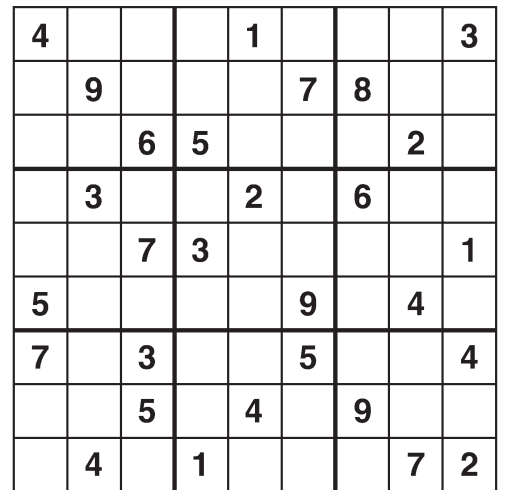
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SUPER CROSSWORD: JOB SCREENING

- ACROSS
- 1 Perceive
- 8 Wavering
- 16 Dies down
- 20 One of the Great Lakes
- 21 CD from Eminem or Jay-Z, say
- 22 Marshland
- 23 Start of a riddle
- 25 Teal, e.g.
- 26 Mine of films
- 27 First-century emperor
- 28 Sufficient, in dialect
- 29 After-bath sprinkle
- 30 Zest
- 32 Riddle, part 2
- 38 Majestic
- 40 Inane
- 41 High-pH compound
- 42 Sticky, viscous stuff
- 45 Previously called
- 46 "I have to wait"
- 49 ESPN's Hersher
- 50 Riddle, part 3
- 55 They often elicit groans
- 56 "Suffice it ..."
- 57 Chinese zoo mammals
- 58 "Thou — lady"; King Lear
- 59 Hotel's kin
- 60 Young dog
- 61 Sews an edge around
- 65 Riddle, part 4
- 73 Tara of "American Pie"
- 74 Granola bit
- 75 "— Man Answers" (1962 film)
- 76 Jazzy Anita
- 77 Irritated reply to "Are you awake?"
- 81 Devours, with "down"
- 83 Accept
- 84 Riddle, part 5
- 90 Gulf nation
- 91 Good diving score
- 92 Genetic letters
- 93 Flanders
- 94 Ovum, e.g.
- 96 "There it is!"
- 98 Souses
- 102 End of the riddle
- 108 Al who drew Lili Abner
- 109 Old Italian coins
- 110 Tie down, as a ship
- 111 Sheik, e.g.
- 113 Actress Carrere
- 114 Mark Twain's Huck
- 115 Riddle's answer
- 120 Poker cost
- 121 Ethereal quality
- 122 Relate (to)
- 123 Prayer opener
- 124 Northern parts of New York and New Jersey
- 125 Numbers used in sums
- DOWN
- 1 Divining rod
- 2 Get some air
- 3 German military camp
- 4 Jaguar, e.g.
- 5 "— Brookovich"
- 6 Gone up
- 7 — Dame statement in Windows ads
- 8 Suffix with script
- 9 Round bread of India
- 10 Hot tub
- 11 In a docile way
- 12 1985 Kate Nelligan film
- 13 In re
- 14 "Dallas" actor Patrick
- 15 Singer Sumac
- 16 Begin, as a journey
- 17 — ball (pool hall item)
- 18 "Fists of Fury" star
- 19 Get sight of
- 24 "— the weather?"
- 29 Phone no.
- 31 Port of Japan
- 33 Actress Lisa
- 34 Poem of lamentation
- 35 "Hick" actor Baldwin
- 36 Hayek of Hollywood
- 37 Window ledge
- 39 Parking —
- 43 — left field
- 44 Time
- 46 Repeated statement in Windows ads
- 47 Plating metal
- 48 Kind of PC monitor
- 50 Rage
- 51 — nous
- 52 "There — I" in team"
- 53 Musical piece
- 54 Racket-raising Arthur
- 55 Rover's foot
- 60 Fruit discard
- 62 Arcane
- 63 Annoyed with
- 64 Boa, for one
- 66 "Right, bro"
- 67 0% of the people
- 68 Biker's bike, colloquially
- 69 Largest city on Hawaii
- 70 "Get — back!"
- 71 Abrades
- 72 Colicene substance
- 78 Dance great de Mille
- 79 Ovid's 1,051
- 80 Diarist Anais
- 81 Took the prize
- 82 Florida city
- 84 Breathe loudly
- 85 Bringing up the rear
- 86 Collides with
- 87 Not deserved
- 88 Tramped (on)
- 89 "Holiday" actor Ayres
- 95 Mao — -tung
- 96 Romeo and Juliet's town
- 97 "It's — state of affairs"
- 99 Lane of Broadway
- 100 Narcotic
- 101 Generates
- 103 Beatnik's "Got it!"
- 104 People on the move
- 105 Like a well-pitched inning
- 106 "Sing, Sing, Sing" drummer Gene
- 107 Totally filled
- 112 Longtime West Virginia senator Robert
- 114 — Schwarz
- 115 Sorority letter
- 116 Humid
- 117 Suffix with colour
- 118 Ar-tee link
- 119 Honored Fr. woman



SUDOKU



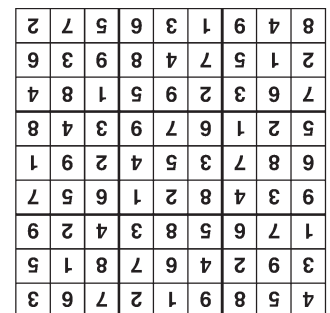
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