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Oregon House District 60 Newsletter

Issue #8
News & Information on COVID-19 in Oregon

Friends,

A lot has happened in the past week. I am regularly on conference calls handling various aspects of the Coronavirus. Congress is approving additional funding for small businesses and hospitals as the original funds have run dry. The State Emergency Board is meeting to allocate emergency funds to different causes. Many of you have now received stimulus checks while others are still waiting for theirs. The unemployment system continues to have technical issues that they are still working to fix.

The good news is Oregon's curve continues to flatten. The Governor has begun discussions regarding reopening. A legislative special session is likely to be called in late May or June to balance the state budget and deal with additional layers of policy changes needed to address the state's response to the Coronavirus.

We are seeing incredible efforts by local communities and neighbors to help in any way they can, which we appreciate so much. We all must work together to get through this.

House District 60 Coronavirus Updates

House District 60's current stats are as follows:

COUNTY	POSITIVE	DEATHS	NEGATIVE
Oregon Statewide	2,127	83	41,849
Baker	0	0	56
Grant	1	0	47
Harney	0	0	46
Lake	0	0	61
Malheur	6	0	204

Update on Re-Opening Oregon

Last week, Senator Findley and I sent a letter to Governor Brown requesting to utilize Harney County as a pilot project for reopening. Harney County is uniquely positioned because of the small population, relative isolation, no major freeways or interstate access, no positive cases of COVID-19, hospital readiness, access to testing, etc. The goal being to reopen this area by May 1st and see how it goes. We have asked the State for assistance with regards to testing materials and PPE for the Harney District Hospital. I felt putting forth our own reopening plan, instead of waiting for the state to create one, would be a more proactive approach, and hopefully get things moving more quickly.

I have also been in touch with all the Counties in District 60, all of our Counties are working to develop their own plan for recovery. We are making sure there is a regionalization effort to support each County's effort. These plans are being developed to protect the vulnerable, save lives, and restart the economy, and will be sent to the Governor within the week. Each of these plans will address the refined parameters the executive branch outlined at the beginning of this week. I want to thank our Counties for taking the lead in these efforts and I am will support them as they are presented.

Our small businesses will not survive if they are forced to wait another month or more to reopen, especially when the rural areas of the state are not experiencing this epidemic in the same way as the metro areas. I will continue expressing to Governor Brown that we need to deal with this in a county or regional manner, rather than a statewide one-size-fits-all plan. We must empower our local leaders and support them in these efforts.

2020 Oregon Primary Election

The Primary Election is upon us. By now you should have received the voters' pamphlet in the mail. Ballots will be mailed shortly. The deadline to register to vote for the May Primary Election is April 28th. This will be the first time Oregonians will not need a stamp to return their ballot because of SB 861 passed by the legislature in 2019 which approved pre-paid postage for ballots. I encourage everyone, no matter how you vote, to fill out your ballots and stick them in the mail before the May 19th election day. More information about registration can be found [here](#).

Emergency Board

The E-board met on April 23rd to vote on allocating more than \$30 million in emergency funds. The meeting discussion centered on funding for safe shelter and rental assistance, emergency business assistance, emergency housing for victims of domestic and sexual violence, the Oregon Worker Relief Fund, long-term care worker COVID-19 testing and training, federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, rural hospitals stabilization loans, fire season costs, and other topics. More information, including a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Agriculture

The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced this week the creation of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program in the amount of \$19 billion to provide critical support to farmers and ranchers that have been affected by the pandemic. This includes \$16 billion in direct support to farmers and ranchers based on actual losses for agricultural producers. More information can be found [here](#).

Agricultural entities with 500 or fewer employees will also soon be eligible for the Economic Injury Disaster Loans and Emergency Grants.

Education

The federal CARES Act provided \$3 billion for States to ensure online education continues for all students. Oregon will get over \$32 million in grant funds to support K-12 and higher education needs.

Unemployment and Small Business

The Governor announced that Oregon will be waiving the “waiting week” for unemployment claims. This change will be retroactive. As of last week, approximately 290,000 Oregonians have filed for unemployment—that’s about 15 percent of jobs statewide. That’s more people out of work than during the Great Recession

The Employment Dept has also said they expect to have the second piece of the CARES Act (Pandemic Unemployment Assistance) benefits up and running in a few weeks. This is the unemployment benefits for self-employed, 1099 contract workers, gig workers, self-employed, etc. More information on what aid you may qualify for can be found [here](#).

Hospitals

Thursday, Governor Brown announced the lifting the Executive Order banning non-emergency procedures on May 1, as long as health care providers can demonstrate they have met new requirements for COVID-19 safety and preparedness. The announcement indicates that this will include hospitals, surgical centers, medical offices, and dental offices.

Oregon has 32 SHIP (State Health Improvement Plan) designated hospitals that will each receive about \$73,000 from the CARES Act. This is in addition to the \$100 billion from the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, which is being directly deposited to all hospitals. All of the hospitals in Oregon House District 60 are SHIP designated locations.

The U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services has also announced additional funds from the CARES Act will be distributed within the healthcare industry, including \$100 billion to healthcare providers (including hospitals); \$50 billion of the Provider Relief Fund for general distribution to Medicare facilities and \$10 billion provided to hospitals in hard hit areas; and a portion of the \$100 billion Provider Relief Fund will be used to reimburse healthcare providers, at Medicare rates, for COVID-related treatment of the uninsured.

Also, Congressman Walden’s office notified us that a second round of payments to hospitals and health care providers in the amount of \$40 billion will be distributed as follows: \$10 billion for rural hospitals based on operating expenses; \$20 billion for hospitals on a revenue basis, including addressing Medicaid and Medicare Advantage revenues; \$10 billion for COVID-19 hot spots.

Transit

The CARES Act also provided more than \$42 million for rural transit options. These grants will provide for rural operations, preventative maintenance work, project administration, intercity bus operations, and direct and indirect state administrative costs related to the Coronavirus response.

Federal Updates

Congressman Walden has been appointed to the White House Economic Task Force which advises the President on re-opening the economy.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL) have both run out of funds. More than 1,650,000 loans were approved for small businesses in the amount of \$350 billion. That includes 9,508 PPP loans in Oregon for a total of just over \$2.4 billion in Oregon.

Small Businesses that were not able to get funds through the PPP program in the first round, should be ready to apply for funding, as Congress is expected to approve a second round of funding within the next few days with those that have not yet received aid getting priority status.

Lastly, I would like to ask you all to please write letters to Governor Brown urging her to implement the County and regional plans. We must allow those plans to move forward once they have met all of the state-mandated requirements. We cannot allow the slow-roll of restarting our economy, and we must continue to protect lives and protect our vulnerable populations.

Be safe.



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Frontier Oregon—The Best Part of the State

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