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Subject: October 14, 2021 Daily Clips
Date: October 14, 2021 at 10:13 AM
To: House Republican Comm HR.Comm@oregonlegislature.gov



Oregon News

[Oregon Republicans sue over Democrat-drawn redistricting maps](#)

KGW

Republicans say the maps are gerrymandered, and hope a judge will agree so the courts redraw the new maps.

[New statehouse districts cut across Klamath County, Klamath Falls](#)

Herald and News

State representatives and local election officials are trying to sort out how Klamath County's house districts will change once a new state legislative map goes into effect in 2022.

But one thing is certain: Local officeholders will soon have new titles.

As part of the redistricting, led by Democratic-controlled 2020 Legislature in Salem, the two Oregon House districts that cover Klamath County — districts 55 and 56 — will change dramatically. In the most basic explanation, the newly-drawn District 55 would cover parts of Klamath and Deschutes counties while District 56 would stretch across parts of Klamath and Jackson counties.

That change — if it survives legal review — will push current Klamath County representatives Werner Reschke and Vikki Breese-Iverson into new districts. The new map would also create an unoccupied District 56, which will be filled with a new representative in the 2022 election. Rep. Reschke said the redrawn maps, which he described as gerrymandering, is due to the self-interested nature of politics: Democrats are in control of the Legislature and they drew maps that benefit Democrats.

"You have self-interested people carving up the state for themselves and that's not good for Oregon," he said.

The new map slices Klamath Falls in half — placing the east side of town in District 55, which will also include most of eastern and northern Klamath County. Klamath Falls proper and the western edge of town will be in District 56. That district will also include south and west Klamath County and much of eastern Jackson County.

Reschke, who has been vocal about his opposition to the redistricting, called the remapping of the districts a solidification of Democratic power.

He said there is a lot of broken trust between Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature, mainly due to House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, renegeing on a deal to grant the GOP an equal say in new congressional and legislative maps.

For Reschke, keeping Klamath County together in one district makes the most sense, for more than one reason. Klamath County has just the right population (roughly 70,000 people, the amount required to form a congressional district) and Reschke said having one representative would help streamline discussions about complicated water issues.

"Our goal was to unify Klamath County and the Klamath Basin watershed into one district to help promote water discussions," Reschke said in a statement Oct. 2. "The new maps keep Klamath County and the Klamath Basin watershed divided in two."

Moving forward, Reschke hopes an independent commission would be empowered to make

future redistricting decisions. He said the commission would need to be politically balanced and representative of different regions of the state.

"They are done in other states," Reschke said. "And they seem to work well, and you don't hear about gerrymandering in these states."

Rep. Breese-Iverson also believes an independent commission should have power over redistricting.

"I think the commission should have a larger assortment of people from around the state that represent it," Breese-Iverson said. "You have to look at who lives in Oregon, and how do we get those people to represent this people's commission."

[Editorial: Oregon continues to make it worse for the mentally ill](#)

Bend Bulletin

A reminder of how poorly Oregon deals with the mentally ill comes straight from the Oregon State Hospital. People who should get into the hospital for treatment can't get in. There are 18 people found guilty except for insanity who should be in the state hospital getting treatment and serving their sentences. Instead, they are waiting in local jails, as OPB reported.

In fact since the beginning of 2021 no people from any Oregon jurisdiction who have been found guilty except for insanity have been transported to the hospital.

There was a problem before the pandemic. It's worse now.

The solution isn't just to build more beds at the state hospital. The problem is also staffing, especially during the pandemic. The National Guard has been called in twice to help with staffing shortages.

And the issues at the state hospital get reflected back into communities like Central Oregon. People who should be getting the level of care provided by the state hospital can't be sent there. In Deschutes County there are only short-term options.

Legislators didn't do enough to address the issue in this year's session. How long must we wait until they do?

[OREGON DELEGATION QUESTIONS ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF SERVICEMEMBERS](#)

KQEN

Democratic members of Oregon's congressional delegation are asking for answers regarding the alleged mistreatment of Oregon National Guard servicemembers deployed to assist with the state's COVID-19 response.

In a letter to Oregon Governor Kate Brown and Major General Michael E. Stencel, the lawmakers called attention to reports they've received from ORNG members regarding mistreatment, lack of organization, delay of benefits and pay, and failure to pay ORNG members what they are owed. The letter said the reports indicate a potentially disturbing pattern of mistreatment during this recent deployment.

[C. Oregon school districts provide update on employee vaccination counts as state deadline nears](#)

KTVZ

Central Oregon school districts and health care facilities have been tracking vaccination rates among its employees as next Monday's deadline approaches for Gov. Kate Brown's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

The state mandate has led to speculation about whether it would seriously harm staffing

The state mandate has led to speculation about whether it would seriously harm staffing levels in these crucial businesses.

The mandate requires all school staff and health care workers to be vaccinated or be granted a religious or medical vaccine exception by their employers.

[Oregon nursing board votes on sanctions for unvaxxed nurses](#)

KOIN

All healthcare workers in Oregon and Washington will have to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by Oct. 18 — or else they will need an exemption to keep their jobs.

Late Wednesday afternoon, the Oregon Nursing Board voted to allow it to investigate and sanction working nurses who are not vaccinated. That means someone would be able to file a complaint with the state nursing board about someone who is not vaccinated.

Discipline could range from reprimand to losing their licenses. The reports can be anonymous.

During an investigation, the healthcare worker will not automatically lose their license or be placed on leave.

The board is not going to police who is or who is not vaccinated — a complaint would have to be sent in to the board.

The state nursing board licenses 72,000 registered nurses in Oregon, 19,000 certified nursing assistants and about 6,000 licensed practical nurses.

[Unions win six week COVID vaccine reprieve for most Oregon government workers](#)

OPB

Two of Oregon's most influential unions have bargained with the state to allow employees of the state executive branch more time to comply with Gov. Kate Brown's mandate, which requires them to be vaccinated by Oct. 18 or risk losing their job.

According to Liz Merah, press secretary for Brown, the governor has agreed to a process which will allow employees represented by SEIU Local 503 and AFSCME Council 75 who have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine by Oct. 18 to complete their immunization by Nov. 30.

The agreements with two of the state's largest public employee unions will provide an extra six weeks for just over 26,800 workers to comply with the mandate.

[Portland-area hospitals see bump in employee vaccinations as mandate deadline approaches](#)

KGW

Hospital systems in the Portland area are seeing increases in their staff's COVID vaccination rates, as the Oct. 18 deadline approaches for Oregon's vaccine mandate for health care workers.

Portland-based Legacy Health said the vaccination rate of its 14,000 person workforce has increased from 85% to 95%. The remaining 5%, which totals about 700 people, are on paid leave. About 140 people of them are currently in the process of getting fully vaccinated, according to a spokesperson with Legacy Health.

The hospital system was one of the first companies in the Portland area to issue its own vaccine mandate that went beyond immediate employees and includes everyone the public interacts with at Legacy facilities, including volunteers, providers, students and vendors, according to VP and Chief Human Resources Officer Sonja Steves. She said the hospital system's firm stance has helped increase their vaccination

helped increase their vaccinations.

[Oregon corrections workers 50% vaccinated as mandate deadline nears](#)

KTVZ

Officials said on Wednesday that around 50% of the roughly 4,500 employees at the Oregon Department of Corrections are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports the DOC also has approved exemptions for nearly 16% of its workforce, or 713 employees, mostly for religious reasons.

The reported vaccination rate comes just before an executive order signed by Gov. Kate Brown goes into place Oct. 18, which requires some state employees to either be fully vaccinated, request an exemption, or risk losing employment.

Corrections officials say in contrast, 80% of the adults in custody across the prison system are now vaccinated.

[Prison workers among Oregon's least vaccinated as deadline looms](#)

The Oregonian \$\$\$

Only about half of all Oregon Department of Corrections employees are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 days before a looming deadline, setting the stage for potential staffing challenges inside state prisons.

State administrators said Wednesday just 46% of corrections employees, contractors or volunteers have been fully vaccinated, among the lowest rates of any state agency, although the corrections department pegged the level at 50%.

Monday is the deadline set by Gov. Kate Brown for some state workers to be fully vaccinated or risk losing their jobs.

An additional 16% of corrections workers have been granted religious or medical exemptions from the vaccine mandate, the agency said. That means at least two-thirds of the 4,500-person workforce is set to be available Tuesday – although that figure could increase by then.

The remaining workers – as many as 1,500 – are at risk of losing their jobs, agency Director Colette Peters said in an interview Wednesday with The Oregonian/OregonLive.

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