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Oregon News

[Oregon government agency inadvertently releases 40,000 state employees' vaccination status](#)

The Oregonian

Oregon's central administrative agency on Monday inadvertently released the vaccination status of more than 40,000 individual state employees to The Oregonian/OregonLive and another media outlet.

A spreadsheet sent to the news organizations was supposed to contain the latest vaccination rates and vaccine exemption rates for each executive branch agency overseen by Gov. Kate Brown, who in August issued a mandate for many state employees to get vaccinated by Monday. The Oregonian/OregonLive has requested daily updates from the state recently but only aggregate figures for each agency.

Instead, Oregon Department of Administrative Services External Relations Director Adam Crawford emailed a file to The Oregonian/OregonLive and the Salem Statesman Journal Monday containing vaccination status by name for all executive branch employees: whether they are verified as vaccinated, received a medical or religious exemption, their vaccination record or exemption request is still being processed, or they had not submitted any information.

Crawford took the blame for the data release. "It's a mistake on my part," he said in a phone call. Ben Morris, a spokesperson for SEIU 503, said the release of information violates an agreement the union signed with the state in September which required the state to keep individuals' vaccination information confidential.

But Morris said that even "more concerning is that one of the main things that we heard from members who were vaccine hesitant is they were concerned about their privacy in this situation. This is a breach of trust at the worst possible time."

Morris said the union is still deciding how to respond.

The Oregonian/OregonLive will not publish the full dataset online, as it does with other state employee datasets such as salary information and public employee pensions.

The data show, as The Oregonian/OregonLive has reported, that large state agencies with low verified as vaccinated rates among their employees include Oregon State Police (74%), the Department of Corrections (70%) and the Forestry Department (65%). The corrections department and state police agency granted some of the highest rates of religious exemptions – 19% and 14% respectively.

[National Democratic group steps in to defend Oregon's new congressional map](#)

OPB

A national Democratic group is pushing back against claims that Oregon's new congressional districts are gerrymandered in the party's favor and urging a judicial panel to okay the map passed by Oregon Democrats last month.

In a filing Monday on behalf of six Oregonians, the National Democratic Redistricting Committee insists the new maps meet all legal standards and were in fact the product of robust negotiation between Republicans and Democrats.

"This map represents compromise not only because of how it was enacted — with Republicans and Democrats negotiating throughout the process — but also because it is a

Republicans and Democrats negotiating throughout the process — but also because it is a competitive map that is reflective of the state,” Kelly Burton, president of the NDRC, said in a statement.

With the filing, the NDRC is seeking to insert itself into a fight that began last week, when former Secretary of State Bev Clarno and three other Republicans sued to challenge the congressional map Democrats muscled through in September.

“The result of this highly partisan process is a clear, egregious partisan gerrymander, as has been widely acknowledged both in Oregon and across the country,” the Republican lawsuit said.

“Democrats are projected to win five of the six of Oregon’s congressional seats in a typical year, results that are not even arguably justified by the Democrats’ overall political support in this State or the political geography of the State.”

Oregon Democrats dismissed those claims when they were raised in a special legislative session to draw new districts last month. Now the NDRC is arguing against the Republican arguments in court.

In a filing on behalf of former Democratic Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins and five others, the group suggests the new maps are fair and legal and, in fact, are the product of negotiations between the parties and reflect input from members of the public.

A piece of the Democratic argument hinges on how the new map was passed. After Republicans said they would not support Democrats’ first proposed congressional maps, House Speaker Tina Kotek reneged on a deal granting the House GOP equal say on what maps were sent for a vote by the entire chamber.

Kotek’s maneuver allowed Democrats to advance their proposals, but Republicans immediately signaled they might simply walk away from the session, denying Democrats the two-thirds quorum needed to conduct business.

Democrats wound up altering their initial congressional map, which would have given the party a strong chance of a 5-1 advantage over the state’s U.S. House seats. The new map was less weighted in Democrats’ favor, analyses suggest, but could tilt in the party’s interest. Republicans eventually returned to the session but objected as Democrats passed the map.

Many within the GOP said the decision to allow the Democratic plan through had little to do with the alterations Democrats made, which they believe are still likely to lead to 5-1 Democratic dominance in Oregon’s U.S. House delegation. Rather, Republicans feared what would happen if they stayed away from session: Maps for the state’s 90 state House and Senate seats would be drawn by Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, a liberal Democrat.

The NDRC filing doesn’t acknowledge that dynamic. Instead, it insists that Republicans returned to the session because House Republican Leader Christine Drazan negotiated a congressional map her GOP colleagues could at least stomach.

“The Compromise Map is the congressional redistricting plan that House Majority Leader Drazan had acceded to in negotiations,” the filing says. Later, it concludes: “Ultimately, both the public and legislative records confirm what various news outlets reported: that the congressional map enacted by the Legislative Assembly and signed by Governor Brown was the result of a compromise among legislative leaders.”

[‘A dangerous time’: Portland, Oregon, sees record homicides](#)

AP News

It was nearly last call on a Friday when Jacob Eli Knight Vasquez went to get a drink across the street from the tavern where he worked in northwest Portland — an area with a thriving dining scene, where citygoers enjoy laid-back eateries, international cuisines and cozy cafés

cozy cafes.

The 34-year-old had been at the pizza bar only a short time when shots rang out. Vasquez was struck by a stray bullet and died at the scene.

His killing in late September was one of the 67 homicides this year in Portland, which has surpassed its previous full-year record of 66 in 1987. And with more than two months remaining in the year Portland will likely well exceed its previous high mark.

Fear and frustration with gang violence have settled over the metropolis, as stories like Vasquez's make some wary to go out at night. Unlike previous years, more bystanders are being caught in the crossfire — from people mourning at vigils and sitting in cars to children playing in a park.

[Teachers bid farewell to students as Oregon's statewide vaccine mandate arrives](#)

KATU

"It's been very emotional. It's been very hard for kids to understand this," one Springfield kindergarten teacher says.

Monday, unvaccinated teachers across Oregon are saying goodbye to their classes. That's because the day marks the deadline for healthcare workers, educators, and some state employees to prove they're fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or have a valid exemption. In the local area, 96.4% of all Eugene 4J district staff have been fully vaccinated, while that number is 93.15% for Springfield Public Schools.

The school district says Springfield has 101 unvaccinated employees, and as of November 1st; 16 of them will no longer be employed with SPS. According to a memorandum between the School District and the Springfield Education Association, educators who fail to comply will be put on unpaid leave effective October 19th through the remainder of the school year.

[Oregon illegal pot grows: More calls to send National Guard](#)

Yahoo News

On the same day last week that a southern Oregon county declared a state of emergency amid a sharp increase in illegal cannabis farms, police raided a site that had about 2 tons of processed marijuana and 17,500 pot plants.

The raid illustrates that the proliferation of industrial-scale marijuana farms has gotten so bad and so brazen that Jackson County Commissioners asked Gov. Kate Brown to send in the Oregon National Guard "to assist, as able, in the enforcement of laws related to the production of cannabis." They also directly appealed to Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek for help getting additional funding to tackle the problem.

During last Wednesday's raid in Medford, near the California border, police found a vast outdoor growing operation, plus harvested plants hanging upside down on drying racks and 3,900 pounds (1,800 kilograms) of resinous buds stashed in huge bags and in stacks of plastic storage containers.

[Oregon vaccine mandate: Federal judge denies last-minute bid to stop order](#)

Fox News

A federal judge on Monday denied a last-minute bid by more than three dozen state employees, health care providers and school staff to temporarily stop the state's COVID-19

vaccination mandate.

U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon rejected their motion for a temporary restraining order, marking the first federal judge's ruling after several state court decisions thwarting similar efforts to block Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's and the Oregon Health Authority's power to require that certain workers to get the vaccines or risk losing their jobs, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

At least 10 vaccine mandate challenges have been filed in state and federal court since September.

[Rural Oregon agencies OK vaccine exemptions as mandate arrives, rather than fire workers](#)

OPB

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's vaccine mandate kicked in Monday — requiring health care workers, nursing home staff, teachers, corrections workers, and many state employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Early reports suggest the mandate has led to a small increase in the weekly rate of new vaccinations in recent months, as its proponents argued it would. But the vaccine requirement has also heightened the staffing crisis in the health care sector, as critics warned.

However, a combination of factors, among them broadly-crafted religious exemption policies allowing people to stay on the job without a vaccination, and state programs providing staffing assistance for employers with staffing holes, appear to be blunting the impact of the mandate in counties with low vaccination rates.

The city of Vale, in Malheur County on the Oregon-Idaho border, is among the jurisdictions that has leaned on approving religious exemptions allowed by the mandate to avoid a mass exodus of first responders.

Just 46% of adults in the county are vaccinated, the second lowest rate in the state.

Vale has a 50-50 split: Half the employees of the fire and ambulance department have been vaccinated; the other half have been granted religious exemptions.

"We had a big scare a few weeks ago when we were sitting at 30% vaccinated for our 24 employees," said Todd Fuller, city manager of Vale.

"As we got closer to the deadline we had more and more people inquiring, and this religious exemption form was a means to keep them working. That's the path we've chosen to go with." Leaders in rural Oregon, including Malheur County, have warned that enforcing the mandate threatened to close schools and take emergency services offline. Some counties declared states of emergency in a bid to persuade the governor to drop the mandate.

[Coronavirus in Oregon: Cases down for 7th straight week, returning to early August levels](#)

The Oregonian

The number of newly identified coronavirus cases fell in Oregon for a seventh consecutive week Monday, dipping to levels not seen since early August.

Oregon recorded 8,033 cases in the past week, down 11% from a week earlier. That includes 3,276 cases announced Monday by the Oregon Health Authority for the preceding three days.

The state also announced 24 deaths.

Weekly cases are now about half the level of the summer apex. And while cases have been trending down for nearly two months, the weekly rate of decline has been far slower than

trending down for nearly two months, the weekly rate of decline has been far slower than the accent of the summer spike.

[Oregon, Washington avoid big shortages over vaccine mandate](#)

KOMO News

The impact could have been detrimental on many levels.

Since the announcement in both Oregon and Washington two months ago, many have worried a vaccine mandate would cause shortages across school districts and hospitals systems.

According to governors in both Oregon and Washington, if employees who work in those fields were not fully vaccinated by Oct.18, they could be without a job.

Both states so far seemed to have avoided any catastrophic shortages. In fact, many fields saw a drastic increase in the number of vaccinations over the last two months.

“I think that one of the things that we're looking at is what has the vaccination mandate made a difference? And it's our assessment at this point that it really has,” said Sharon Reese, Portland Public Schools’ chief human resource officer.

But that didn’t stop some from declining the vaccination altogether.

“As of today, the law was very clear that people would not be working today without either a fully vaccinated status or an exemption,” president of the Evergreen Education Association, Bill Beville, said.

Districts in both states say anyone who hasn’t confirmed their status has been put on unpaid leave and their termination is being processed. Some districts like Evergreen Public Schools in Vancouver are working with a very small number of employees to come to a resolution.

The district told KATU on Monday it employs 3,332 staff members. More than 99% have met the mandate by either getting vaccinated or receiving an exemption. In fact, 8.8% received a medical or religious exemption.

[Schwartz: Innovative thinking needed to solve Oregon's nursing crisis](#)

Portland Tribune

Natasha Schwartz of Southwest Portland is an Oregon Nurses Association board member and a registered nurse at Oregon Health and Science University

The nurse staffing crisis facing Oregon has been decades in the making.

A few health care workers will leave the profession this week due to their decision to decline vaccination, but burnout will lead to a larger number of nurses leaving the bedside. In Oregon, we will not be able to educate enough nurses to replace them.

Bold and decisive action on nursing education and workforce development, or what is sometimes called the nursing pipeline, is crucial to prevent this crisis from getting much, much worse.

Nursing faculty salaries must more closely mirror clinical salaries. Because nursing faculty can make significantly more in a clinical setting, we must address wage disparities to retain qualified educators. One direct way to address pay disparities is for the Legislature to pass legislation like the state of Washington did in 2019.

Washington House Bill 2158, the Workforce Education Investment Act, appropriated nearly \$375 million to address student needs. It also designated a portion of those funds for increasing nurse educator salaries and high-demand program faculty salaries at community and technical colleges. The Oregon Legislature could also consider a wide range of other initiatives, including tax credits and student loan forgiveness grants for nursing faculty, helping create incentives for talented educators to stay teaching.

Health care workers and educators deserve more support than they currently receive.

Health care systems and nursing degree programs should actively seek new partnerships specifically to address faculty salaries. Health care systems can partner with a nursing school by providing direct salary payments to support increasing a nursing faculty member's salary. Those nursing faculty could then serve as preceptors in the hospitals where nursing students would do their clinical placements.

The high cost of nursing programs is often cited by potential nursing students — particularly students from underrepresented communities — as a significant barrier to entry, Oregon Nurses Association is calling on our state's philanthropic community to dramatically increase the number and scale of scholarships for nursing students.

The Oregon Nurses Foundation already provides some scholarship opportunities, with a focus on students in rural areas and students of color, but larger trusts and foundations in Oregon can, and should, be focused on providing crucial scholarships for students entering nursing school. In particular, Oregon needs to see the creation of new scholarships targeted specifically at students of color, bilingual students, and students from rural areas; all of which are underrepresented in Oregon's nursing workforce.

Finally, ONA is calling for the Legislature to investigate the creation of an Oregon Nurse Corps that would provide student loan forgiveness for nursing students who agree to complete four years of work in areas of the state with the most serious nursing shortages, including rural areas, in community-based organizations that address needs of underserved and marginalized populations, in critical access hospitals, and in critical need units.

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