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Subject: October 1, 2021 Daily Clips
Date: October 1, 2021 at 12:13 PM
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Oregon News

[How redistricting is changing the legislative map in Southern Oregon](#)

KOBI

State legislators beat their deadline on Monday approving both new congressional and legislative maps. But Oregon Republicans said Democrats crossed the line creating the maps in favor of their party. A claim some democrats dispute.

“Klamath County isn’t really Southern Oregon, isn’t really Central Oregon, and it’s not really Eastern Oregon. It’s kind of its own unique place. Keeping that community together would have been the right thing to do,” said State Rep. E. Werner Reschke.

From a distance, it may not be much of a change with Oregon’s House District map. But if people take a closer look, that’s far from the truth in Klamath County. State Representative Reschke’s district used to encompass the City of Klamath Falls. Now the city’s being split up. Something Reschke is not happy with.

“[The representative for] western Klamath and east Jackson County is from Jackson County. Now I’m going to have to work with somebody who doesn’t understand any of the water issues, any of the issues in Klamath Falls. It makes it a lot more difficult,” said State Rep. Reschke.

Residents in his county aren’t the only ones seeing changes, Josephine County is too though the changes there are less dramatic.

“Josephine County has been a hub of 4 different legislative seats on the house and 2 senate districts for the last 20 years,” said State Rep. Lily Morgan, “The changes of the new map shrink that down to just Representative Stark and [me]”.

First-term State Rep. Lily Morgan said that will lead to less representation in Salem.

“Tell me that a portion of Grants Pass is gonna feel like they’ve been heard when they’re competing with a suburb of Medford and a suburb of Roseburg,” said State Rep. Morgan. The move she says only hurts Josephine County voters as their votes will now be combined with neighboring districts in Southern Oregon. The redistricting maps, and the bills that create them, were signed by Gov. Kate Brown Monday.

What’s the future of redistricting in Oregon? Some Democrats have joined Republicans in their stance against the political nature of the redistricting process. Ashland Democratic State Senator Jeff Golden thinks the way the process is being done is wrong. Monday he urged other political leaders to take steps toward having an independent commission decide on how Oregon handles redistricting in the future. That’s something he said 14 other states are already doing.

[The Daily Brew: Oregon enacts first congressional map after 2020 census](#)

Ballotpedia

House Republican Leader Christine Drazan (R) criticized the maps, saying, “This is by no means over. The illegal congressional map adopted today, clearly drawn for partisan benefit, will not survive legal challenge. Political gerrymandering in Oregon is illegal and drawing congressional lines to ensure five out of six seats for your party long-term is gerrymandering.”

[Special Session Drama Could Hamper OR Democrats' 2022 Agenda](#)

US News (AP)

The recently concluded redistricting special session at the Oregon Legislature was marked by a broken deal, a Republican walkout and accusations of “cheating” that have reignited tensions on the state House floor.

And the fallout from the special session may linger, bleeding into next year’s legislative session. “It seems extremely likely to me that (the last special legislative session) indicates heightened tensions, polarization and likely more extreme maneuvers — particularly from Republicans — in the state Legislature in the next year,” said Christopher McKnight Nichols, an associate professor of history at Oregon State University.

“The most valuable thing we have here is our word,” Republican Rep. Suzanne Weber said on the state House Floor on Monday. “So when the deal was broken ... I lost trust, and when trust is gone I genuinely don’t know how this institution can work.”

The most controversial moment of September's redistricting session was when House Speaker Tina Kotek, a Democrat, rescinded a power-sharing deal with GOP lawmakers. The agreement, reached in April, had given House Republicans an equal say in redrawing political maps in exchange for them to stop blocking bills with delaying tactics.

The even split on the House redistricting committee essentially granted the minority party veto power over the state's new political boundaries, which included a sixth U.S. House seat.

But Kotek — who announced she is running for governor in 2022 — voided the deal on the first day of the special session, saying Republicans weren't engaging constructively. “As far as I’m concerned, we held up our end of the bargain as long as we could,” Kotek said following the conclusion of the redistricting session.

Republicans say they were cheated, as Democrats cleared the path to pass maps they wanted. “She lied and broke her promise not just to us but to Oregonians,” Minority Leader Christine Drazan said.

“I’ve had my challenges with Republican leaders, but not to the level that I’ve had with Leader Drazan,” Kotek said, noting she has led the chamber through nine regular and six special sessions. Drazan said in an interview with The Associated Press that if “divisions get greater and majority and minority status gets more and more separated” then it's “going to hurt Oregon.” But the exact effect the special session will have remains unknown.

“It seems to me, that every indicator right now is that it’s going to be a much more heightened and tense environment. And much more politicized — even more than it has been, increasing the likelihood of walkouts and the likelihood of allegations of bullying and unconstitutional behavior,” McKnight Nichols said.

While Republicans criticized Kotek's broken deal, the fallout also prompted State Rep Janelle Bynum, a Democrat, to announce she will once again pursue the House speakership, saying “repair work” needs to be done.

“If the session proved anything, it’s that we need a reset,” Bynum wrote in a Facebook post Tuesday.

[Oregon hospitals prepare for impact vaccine mandate will have on staffing](#)

KATU

Hospitals in Oregon are preparing right now for the impact of the vaccine mandate on staffing.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of health care workers who've yet to be vaccinated.

The state deadline for health care workers to be fully vaccinated is October 18th, but some health systems, including Legacy, are implementing earlier deadlines. Unvaccinated Legacy employees, who didn't have an exemption approved, will go on unpaid administrative leave starting Friday. They'll have until the mid-October deadline to get vaccinated or risk being fired.

[Civil rights coalition represents Oregon woman in lawsuit over COVID-19 vaccine mandate](#)
KTVL

A statewide civil rights coalition said it filed a lawsuit against the state of Oregon and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) over the state's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Ben Edtl, the CEO of Free Oregon, Inc. said his coalition filed the lawsuit on behalf of its members and a group of 14 healthcare workers, first responders, government employees, and teachers throughout the state.

"None of our Plaintiffs have been given the option by their employers to decline vaccination," Edtl said. "Many of them have been denied exemptions, like in Molly's case."

[Merkley, Wyden: Approved stopgap funding bill includes Oregon wildfire response, drought relief](#)
KTVZ

Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., announced Thursday that key legislation to fund the federal government until December and respond to recent natural disasters has passed both chambers of Congress and will be signed into law.

Merkley serves as Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, one of the key subcommittees directing the funding.

This legislation includes billions of dollars in funding for wildfire disaster response, drought relief, public lands restoration, and other critical needs for Western states that have been hit hard by record wildfires and drought in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

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