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Oregon News

[Oregon political notebook: Battles move on from redistricting](#)

Bend Bulletin

The drawn-out fight over political redistricting has sucked most of the oxygen out of any other political news over the past two weeks. While waiting for any lawsuits against the maps that would push the finalization of districts into early 2022, the rest of the political world did not stop spinning.

A renewed drive to allow sales of hard liquor in grocery markets was launched Monday. The Oregon Secretary of State's Office confirmed it had received three proposed initiatives for the November 2022 election.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, announced just before Labor Day that she's running for governor in 2022. She's raised just under \$184,000 while spending just over \$22,000 so far. Kotek and Read are not among the 11 candidates for governor who have filed statements of candidacy with the Secretary of State's office. Others have moved ahead on the required paperwork. The latest is Bud Pierce, who signed up to run for governor in 2022. Pierce was the GOP nominee in 2016 who lost the special election to Gov. Kate Brown.

Filing for offices does not prohibit anyone from raising money to run for office. Registering a political action committee with the secretary of state is a completely different function, and one that could be started much earlier. There may be just 11 people who have filed for governor, but there are already 19 campaign finance committees for the state's top job.

In a sign of the importance of the bulging beachhead that Democrats have established in Central Oregon, Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, was appointed to House leadership halfway through his first term.

Kropf will be one of five assistant House majority leaders. The position is the fourth ranking spot among the 37 House Democrats. Kropf defeated incumbent Rep. Cheri Helt, R-Bend, ending a string of five straight GOP victories in a district with a growing Democratic voter registration majority.

Kropf told The Oregonian on Monday that he will pay \$4,500 in fines levied by the secretary of state for a six-month delay in reporting \$45,000 in "in-kind" campaign contributions from the Oregon Education Association's PAC.

[Oregon teachers, health care workers are staring down a deadline to get vaccinated](#)

NPR

Oregon's deadline for teacher and healthcare worker vaccination is Oct. 18. Some reluctant people have been waiting until the very end to get the shot. Others are still refusing to be vaccinated.

AUDIE CORNISH, HOST:

In Oregon, some people are staring down a deadline to get vaccinated. The governor ordered health care workers, educators and state employees to be fully vaccinated by mid-October. In some rural parts of the state, local authorities say the mandate is causing problems. From Malheur County, Katia Riddle reports.

KATIA RIDDLE, BYLINE: Even before the pandemic, this southeastern corner of Oregon was thin on

emergency services. Now some say the vaccine mandates could devastate their small workforce.

SAMANTHA CHAMBERLAIN: We were just counting today. There are only, like, 10 of us that are vaccinated.

RIDDLE: Samantha Chamberlain supervises EMT ambulance drivers. She works out of the small town of Vale.

CHAMBERLAIN: That's 17 people that we lose.

RIDDLE: More than half of your staff.

CHAMBERLAIN: More than half of our staff, yes.

...

RIDDLE: At the Malheur County Fairgrounds, cars roll in past the horse stables - one line for testing, one for vaccination. Someone who says the mandate did bring him in, reluctantly, is Matthew McClain.

MATTHEW MCCLAIN: A lot of people I've talked to aren't so much opposed to the vaccine. They're opposed to the mandate.

RIDDLE: McClain works for the Department of Corrections. He's here getting the shot with his wife. They were both going to do it eventually, but he's still irritated.

MCCLAIN: Being told that you have to put something in your body is kind of a shocking thing to a lot of people.

RIDDLE: Some facilities have reported a recent increase in vaccination rates, with staff scared of losing their jobs. According to the state, Malheur County has only about 50% of health care workers vaccinated.

SARAH POE: There are people who are going to say no to a vaccine and be at risk because of the mandates.

RIDDLE: Sarah Poe is the director of public health in Malheur County. She says in this conservative part of the state, when an order comes down from a liberal governor, people have a knee-jerk reaction to it.

POE: Really, I think that the politicians need to stay out of it.

[Could Oregon's vaccine mandate impact the state unemployment rate?](#)

KATU

The clock has run out. Monday, October 4 was the last day healthcare workers and teachers could roll up their sleeves in Oregon and get their coronavirus shot in time for the vaccine mandate deadline on October 18.

Next month, there is another deadline for Oregon state workers. Those who do not get the shot will likely lose their jobs.

KATU News reached out to the Oregon Employment Department to see if workers who refuse to get the shot could impact the state's unemployment rate.

No one from OED was available for an interview Monday, but in response to our email, the department said, "The Employment Department estimates that slightly more than half of all jobs in Oregon fall under either the state or federal vaccine guidelines going into effect in the coming weeks."

KATU News reached out for clarity, but did not hear back from the office on Monday.

In previous responses to KATU News, we learned workers fired for refusing vaccinations may not qualify for unemployment benefits, particularly those who are denied exemptions for medical reasons or religious beliefs. The Acting Director of the Oregon Employment Department says it's not a one-size-fits-all approach and under federal law, the department is required to look at each situation individually.

In an effort to keep people from losing their jobs, Clackamas County helped people meet the October 18 deadline by hosting a vaccine clinic. Organizers say they decided to host the clinic a week ago to help those who needed to make the deadline. They estimate more than 40 people came to the clinic to get their shot in four hours. By the county's standards, it was a big turnout. "The people who have been coming in aren't as thrilled as the initial people who were getting vaccinated six months ago. I think a lot of these people are more than likely here because they're being mandated to either by their job or by the governor's mandate for educators and healthcare workers," explained Ryan Spiker, Clackamas County Public Health Clinic Manager.

[Coronavirus cases fall for fifth straight week in Oregon; down 36% from summer summit](#)

The Oregonian

The number of newly identified coronavirus cases declined in Oregon for a fifth week in a row Monday, pushing average daily cases 36% below the summer summit.

Oregon recorded about 10,400 cases in the past week, a 9% drop from a week earlier. That includes the 3,286 cases announced Monday by the Oregon Health Authority for the preceding three days.

State health officials Monday also reported eight COVID-19-related deaths.

Oregon's summer coronavirus rise and autumn decline generally mirror the national trend. But the highly transmissible delta variant proved especially troublesome for Oregon, producing the state's highest case counts and hospitalizations of the pandemic, and the second-highest number of deaths.

While confirmed and presumed infections have been falling for weeks, the rates of weekly declines have been modest, ranging from a high of 11% to just 2%. The winter and spring peaks produced much steeper drop-offs, with new infections falling more quickly.

New forecasts suggest the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals will remain above pre-summer surge levels into December.

[Here's why Oregon is banning homebuyer love letters](#)

OPB

This country has a big racial gap when it comes to home ownership. According to the Urban Institute, 72% of white Americans own their homes. For Hispanics, it's just 48% and for Black Americans, 42%. It's a problem that's been shaped by lending practices, generational wealth, urban planning and, in a small way, by love letters.

In overheated real estate markets, these personal letters from buyers to sellers can help tip the scales. Now, Oregon is restricting them because they may violate federal fair housing laws. NPR's Deena Prichep spoke to a homebuyer, real estate experts and an Oregon lawmaker about the change.

[COVID vaccinations up in Oregon; new cases in every county](#)

KOIN

Hospitals remain full, ICUs remain near capacity and the 7-day vaccination average increased, the Oregon Health Authority said in their Monday report.

For the 3-day period from October 1-3, another 3286 confirmed/presumptive cases of COVID-19 were recorded in all 36 counties of Oregon. An additional 8 people died from the coronavirus.

Cumulatively, 334,971 cases of COVID have been identified in Oregon since the pandemic began and 2,222 people have died, officials said.

began and 3823 people have died, officials said.

Over the 7-day period, an average of 10,322 doses of vaccine were administered each day. One week ago, that average was 6989 doses per day.

The list of COVID cases by county from October 1-3:

Baker (10), Benton (78), Clackamas (258), Clatsop (24), Columbia (50), Coos (48), Crook (27), Curry (3), Deschutes (324), Douglas (60), Gilliam (1), Grant (10), Harney (11), Hood River (48), Jackson (153), Jefferson (44), Josephine (49), Klamath (54), Lake (4), Lane (275), Lincoln (28), Linn (236), Malheur (34), Marion (333), Morrow (8), Multnomah (477), Polk (41), Sherman (2), Tillamook (7), Umatilla (80), Union (46), Wallowa (20), Wasco (39), Washington (320), Wheeler (3) and Yamhill (81).

[Oregon restaurant industry prepares for challenging rainy season ahead](#)

KATU

Restaurants in Oregon are preparing for another challenge as the pandemic drags on.

With some people still leery of eating in indoor public spaces, the Pacific Northwest's rainy season is complicating things once again for those restaurants that have established outdoor dining. Still, some owners think they are better prepared this time around.

O'Leary just recently opened again for indoor dining. He's limiting capacity and only allowing those with proof of vaccination inside. But he's also been able to have plenty of outdoor seating and he's trying to improve upon it this season.

Perfecting the art of outdoor seating in a rainy climate has been daunting for restaurants across the region. Despite that, those in the industry say weather isn't their biggest concern right now.

"Staffing, at this point, is the most difficult thing we're dealing with overall," said O'Leary.

Greg Astley with the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (ORLA) says the same is true for nearly all restaurants.

"We see a lot of restaurant operations that are shutting down certain days or hours," said Astley. "They don't have enough staff."

Both O'Leary and Astley also agree that supply issues are a second major concern.

"Shopping is definitely a challenge," said O'Leary.

"We have places that aren't able to get the protein they need," said Astley. "The cups, the lids, there's going to be shortages of more supplies as the months go on."

[Florida man sentenced to prison after receiving \\$130,000 in fraudulent Oregon tax refunds](#)

The Oregonian

A Florida man was sentenced to more than four years in federal prison for filing hundreds of fake tax returns in several states, including Oregon, federal prosecutors said Monday. Damian O. Barrett, 40 of Homestead, Florida, filed 745 fake tax returns in 19 different states from 2015 to 2018.

Barrett owned two Florida-based tax preparation companies, Max Tax Experts LLC and Winngate Tax Services LLC, according to court documents. He used the first company to submit tax returns for legitimate clients and the second company to submit fraudulent income tax returns.

Barrett sought nearly \$900,000 in fraudulent tax refunds and received more than \$234,000.

Of the money he received, \$130,000 came from the Oregon Department of Revenue. He

had filed 248 tax returns with the state requesting more than \$222,000 in refunds.

had filed 348 tax returns with the state requesting more than \$322,000 in refunds. Barrett used names, social security numbers and employer identification numbers of various individuals — some of whom were his legitimate clients — to submit fraudulent returns, court documents say. He set up bank accounts in the names of some of his victims to receive the refunds.

He also intentionally excluded more than \$21,000 in income from his personal income tax return in 2016 and did not file a personal income tax return in 2017.

In August 2020, a federal grand jury in Portland indicted Barrett with several counts of mail fraud and laundering. He was later charged with mail fraud, filing a false tax return and aggravated identity theft. He pleaded guilty to all three charges.

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