



Nominees for 25th annual Oregon Taxpayer Awards: **Please Vote**

WORST OREGON POLITICAL FIGURE IN 2025 NOMINEES

• **Oregon Governor Tina Kotek:** Her \$4.3 billion gas tax (hikes gas taxes 15%, ups DMV fee 300%, hikes transit wage tax 100%) soared through the Legislature with as little public notice and involvement as possible. That gas tax is currently suspended because a referendum petition drive was launched by Senator Bruce Starr, Representative Ed Diehl, and Jason Williams of the Taxpayers Association of Oregon, which freezes the tax until a public vote is held if the petition secures the required number of valid signatures. Kotek threw a \$9,330 taco party for government employees. Kotek authored a bill that raises the threat level requirements for registering as a sex offender, meaning that many of the 18,000 unregistered violent sex offenders—rapists and sexual predators—no longer qualify as “dangerous” under the new classification. Another Kotek bill delays (possibly by years) the time required to process sex offenders. Both bills died. (KATU 1/31/25, SB 820, SB 821)

• **Kris Strickler, Head of the Oregon Dept. of Transportation (resigned):** The projected costs of the Rose Quarter road expansion increased

from \$450 million to \$1.9 billion (they wanted to cap Interstate 5 and build a park and houses on top of it), stalling the project and prompting the project manager to resign after only eight months. The I-5 bridge between Oregon and Washington saw its projected costs balloon from \$4.8 billion to \$10 billion, which has stalled the project and resulted in the project manager’s resignation. Under Strickler’s administration, ODOT made a disastrous \$1 billion accounting error. (OPB 11/13/25, OPB 12/11/25, Clark County Today 9/5/25, KGW 3/5/25)

• **Congresswoman Val Hoyle:** She violated the STOCK ACT when she failed to report her stock trades, which turned out to be extremely profitable. In fact, in three years, her investments grew from \$439,000 to \$1.7 million! A 2025 audit revealed gross mismanagement during her tenure as head of Oregon’s Labor Department, with civil rights and labor-violation cases ignored, dropped, and backlogged. Hoyle voted for the government shutdown (as a protest to spend more money despite the Federal \$38 trillion debt) and voted against the Laken Riley Act, which mandated detention for illegal migrants who commit crimes like burglary, assaulting law enforcement,

and violence that leads to death. (OPB 9/17/25, State Audit 11/25, DHS PR 1/29/25)

• **Leslee Barnes, Multnomah County Preschool Director (resigned):** As director, she diverted \$833,494 of county tax dollars to her own family-owned child care business, which is a blatant conflict of interest. Even worse, it served only nine children at the time -- \$92,000 per child! Barnes’s county government salary was \$151,000. (Willamette Week 7/29/25)

• **Six Oregon government officials publicly celebrate the murder of Charlie Kirk:** A Cornelius school board member, a Springfield school employee, a Lincoln City teacher, a Pleasant Hill School official, a McMinnville City Councilor, and a Wilsonville Dev. Review Board member all made positive online comments on Charlie Kirk’s murder. Liberal activists cheer Kirk’s murder while being angry over the death of foreign drug-boat narco-terrorists. (Oregonian 9/11/25, Lincoln Chronicle 9/19/25, KVAL 9/12/25, KEZI 9/17/25, KOIN 9/18/25)

WORST EXAMPLE OF OREGON GOVERNMENT WASTE NOMINEES

• **\$200,000 for Kotek and staff to travel to Asia to promote Oregon.** We could not find a single news article or public relations activity to complement

their core mission during their long 14-day trip. *(OPB 9/25/25)*

- **\$46,100 European trip for politicians to study car-free cities.** Three Portland City Councilors, along with staff, flew to Vienna to study government-controlled housing programs and car-free cities. *(Oregonian 9/18/25)*

- **\$91,000 Hawaii travel for sewer agency meetings.** Various public sewer officials in Washington County helped to create a separate Oregon-based sewer organization and then directed it to host their information meetings in Hawaii (2,600 miles away from where both organizations were located). Some staff stayed at \$1,000/night beachfront luxury hotels. *(Oregonian 11/21/25)*

- **Taxpayers subsidized a \$700 million Ritz-Carlton hotel that went bankrupt.** The most expensive hotel in Oregon received tax breaks and went bankrupt within the first year of opening. The newly built food court next to the hotel also received tax breaks. *(Oregonian 4/9/25)*

- **Kotek's \$9,330 taco-tostada party for government employees.** Kotek's government employee appreciation event went against ethics guidelines. *(Oregon Capitol Chronicle 1/8/25)*

- **\$900,000 fence to block the homeless.** ODOT has spent \$900,000 on a single fence to keep the homeless away from the I-405 freeway. Homeless people have just moved around it. *(Oregonian 6/11/25)*

- **\$2,900 in adult-intimacy toys for the state psychiatric hospital.** More than 60 items at taxpayer expense were provided to patients to help them "express" themselves. *(KGW-TV 6/26/25)*

- **\$1.2 billion for non-citizen health-care benefits.** 105,000 non-citizens are enrolled in Healthier Oregon program. *(KATU 10/20/25)*

- **\$10 million in tax dollars to build a Portland mega-restaurant.** Lawmakers approved the construction of a celebrity-branded James Beard food

court. Why are national celebrities getting tax bailouts from Oregonians? Another Portland food court, the newly built Flock Food Court, next to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, also received tax benefits. Make no mistake, taxpayer-funded restaurants steal customers and destroy other restaurants that are not government-funded and that play by the rules like everyone else. Over 100 Portland restaurants have closed due to the 20 new/increased taxes enacted since 2019. This is a doom loop where the government over-taxes restaurants into extinction while using the tax money to pay private people to build new ones. *(OPB 6/28/25, KOIN-TV 1/19/25)*

- **Affordable housing director paid \$240,000 to leave.** Portland paid its Housing Department head to leave after serving only one year. The director discovered \$20 million in unspent renter-relief funds and was told not to make the discovery public. *(OPB 11/20/25)*

- **Benefits for those who quit work.** Newly enacted SB 916 gives 10 weeks of unemployment benefits to workers who leave jobs to strike against their employers. Oregon joins three other states in this self-defeating policy. Coincidentally, all three pay-to-strike states lead the nation in unemployment. *(SB 916 in 2025)*

GOLDEN SCHNOZ NOMINEES: (government sticks its nose where it doesn't belong)

- **Bill limits elected lawmakers to only 25 bills.** The Oregon Senate President authored a bill limiting the number of bills. This handicaps minority party and independent lawmakers, who already feel like their legislation is blocked by the same Senate President. *(HB 2006)*

- **Cities block Federal ICE employees from renting hotel rooms.** Newport's mayor and the city of Waldport have opposed Federal immigration enforcement agents to find a hotel for a major operation. At the same time,

the State of Oregon spent \$29 million of tax dollars for the Ramada Inn airport hotel, which exclusively housed non-citizen migrants entering Oregon. *(OPB 11/25/25, Oregonian 2/5/25)*

- **SB 426 punishes property owners if they are victims (yes, victims) of theft.** Oregon became the first state in the nation to hold homeowners financially liable if they are cheated by a contractor who fails to properly pay his workers. That means when you pay a contractor \$200,000 to build a house, if the contractor doesn't pay his workers and leaves town, you are responsible for paying the \$200,000 again.

WORST BUREAUCRATIC BUNGLER OF 2025 NOMINEES

- **20 prisoners accidentally released.** Oregon Corrections accidentally gave early release to 20 prisoners based on confusing Judicial orders. Police re-arrested 17 of them, while three others are still missing. *(Oregonian 11/26/25)*

- **Oregon has the nation's 8th highest food-stamp error rate at a whopping 14%.** Nearly 1 in 7 food stamp dollars were incorrectly calculated in the recent audit. *(Oregonian 8/14/25)*

- **ODOT makes \$1 billion accounting error.** The Transportation Dept. failed to perform a basic accounting function, causing a \$1.1 billion forecasting error. The error misrepresented nearly 20% of their entire budget, forcing a massive delay in projects to avoid plunging into debt. This comes as ODOT's mismanagement of costs for the I-5 bridge replacement, Rose Quarter project, and Abernathy Bridge have all exploded 200% to 300% above projections. *(KOIN-6 2/7/25)*

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