

## **The Oregonian**

### **Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County Commissioner, Eyes Run for Portland Mayor**

*By Gordon Friedman  
April 10, 2019*

Jessica Vega Pederson, a first-term Multnomah County commissioner, is strongly considering a run for Portland mayor, said a person close to Vega Pederson with knowledge of her thinking.

Vega Pederson had been thinking of running for secretary of state in 2020, the person said, but was approached by the leaders of Portland-based racial equity and labor union groups, who convinced her to turn her eye toward City Hall. The person asked not to be named because their conversations with Vega Pederson were private.

On Wednesday, Vega Pederson declined to directly address questions about whether she is mulling a race for city office. She said her caginess stemmed from caution to avoid invoking a provision of the county charter that she said could require her to resign if she were to declare her candidacy for another office.

Still, Vega Pederson, 44, said that she had not made up her mind about what elected office to seek in 2020, when her term on the county board of commissioners ends.

“I’m trying to figure out the best way I can continue to serve the community,” she told The Oregonian/OregonLive. “Nothing’s off the table.”

Vega Pederson said she has enjoyed local politics, where she has worked on a range of issues from the needs of children to transportation and climate change.

Born to a Mexican-American family in Crow Point, Indiana and raised in Chicago, Vega Pederson worked at technology companies, eventually rising to become a manager at Microsoft, before being elected to represent most of East Portland in the Oregon House of Representatives in 2012. She served two terms there and was elected county commissioner in 2017.

Portland’s incumbent mayor, Ted Wheeler, has said he is undecided about seeking re-election. If Wheeler declines to run, it would make him Portland’s fourth consecutive one-term mayor.

Police reform advocate Teresa Raiford is the only declared candidate for the 2020 race. But Diego Hernandez, a state representative who represents the same district Vega Pederson did, has said he has not ruled out a run.

At least one City Council seat will be open in 2020, when Commissioner Amanda Fritz retires after three terms. Possible candidates include Hernandez; Carmen Rubio, a former City Hall aide who now directs a Latino-focused nonprofit; consultant and former mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone; and deaf activist Philip Wolfe.

## **The Portland Tribune**

# **Your Tax Dollars at Work: Cities, Counties Spend Big For Bills, Policies**

*By Claire Withycombe/Oregon Capital Bureau  
April 11, 2019*

**Portland, the state's big dog, sits atop a list of jurisdictions trying to influence legislative action.**

Lobbying is largely synonymous with interest groups, but every year, government agencies big and small spend money to amplify their interests at the Capitol.

Yet lobbyists for the city or county you live in or the public university your children attend are working at taxpayer expense in the Capitol with the hope of gaining influence.

"That's our tax dollars lobbying for more tax dollars," said Julie Parrish, a former state representative.

In 2017, the city of Portland spent more on lobbying than any other government body. In fact, at \$353,391, the city was the sixth biggest spender out of all organizations lobbying the Legislature.

City officials said they keep a close eye on the Legislature's activities. In 2017, they tracked 2,091 bills out of the more than 2,800 introduced, and its lobbyists testified 70 times before legislative committees. That year, many of the city's interests advanced. Four of the five initiatives introduced at the city's request became law.

Elizabeth Edwards, the city's head of government relations, said the city lobbies on issues where it needs support from the state — or where it wants the state to allow local control.

The state's most populous city, with than 640,000 residents, faces unique issues, Edwards said. For example, the city wants to prevent fatal traffic accidents. City officials can't on their own reduce speed limits on certain streets to cut the risk of pedestrians or bicyclists being killed in a collision with a vehicle.

So the city wants state legislators to pass a law this year to allow the city to reduce speed limits. "I think people think of lobbyists as a really negative, nefarious figure, and really it's about having better coordination between governments because we do all share constituents and are trying to find more efficient outcomes," Edwards said.

Oregon's cities and counties each band together to lobby for their interests. The League of Oregon Cities was formed nearly a century ago, in 1925, through an intergovernmental agreement. Each city pays dues to fund the league's work.

Other organizations that represent public officials aren't government agencies. One such example: the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators. COSA, which counts public school administrators among its members, and whose board is made up largely of superintendents and administrators of public schools, spent \$261,760 on lobbying the state in 2017.

COSA did not respond to requests from the Oregon Capital Bureau this week to discuss how it is funded.

The Association of Oregon Counties spent about \$333,000 on lobbying the state in 2017, making it the second-highest government spender on lobbying that year — just behind the city of Portland.

Oregonians rely on counties for more public services than in most other states, said McKenzie Farrell of the Association of Oregon Counties, a governmental entity representing the state's 36 counties. "This means that the majority of Oregon legislation has some potential impact on counties," Farrell said. "Because of the depth and breadth of services that counties provide, we track more bills than any other organization in the state."

State agencies also lobby the Legislature, as does the governor's office. Misha Isaak, general counsel to Gov. Kate Brown, said the office doesn't hire private lobbyists to push Brown's policy priorities. But her policy advisors need to report how much time they spend explaining policy to lawmakers in an attempt to further her agenda.

Isaak said the governor campaigns on a policy platform. She's expected to work to get that agenda passed by the Legislature. Having policy advisers work to that end is an "important and legitimate function of her staff," he said.

Some of the governor's desired policies are complex. An example is the cap-and-trade program, which required a 98-page bill to frame. But Kristen Sheeran, Brown's carbon policy adviser, can break it down and explain it to committee members to inform them before they vote. "She can go and meet with members of the Legislature and explain every part of that policy agenda from top to bottom," Isaak said.

#### Special class of lobbyist

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission doesn't track specifically how many lobbyists are registered with the public sector. An Oregon Capital Bureau review of 2017 lobbying data found that at least 95 state agencies and local governments were registered as lobbying clients that year.

It's not clear from the state ethics commission's public database of lobbying expenditures what the money is actually spent on. While one database tracks entities' spending on lobbying, individual lobbyists also have to report the money they spend on food, drinks and entertainment for lobbying purposes every quarter. That information is accessible on a public website.

But they don't have to disclose what they are spending money on — for example, if they buy dinner or a round of beers — just the total dollar amount. They do have to explain what they spent money on if they spent more than \$50 on a single occasion on a legislative or executive branch official, though. They also have to report any spending that their clients reimburse.

Public sector lobbying occurs in other states as well. From 2014 to 2017, lobbyists for the public sector in the 20 states tracked by the National Institute on Money in Politics spent about \$315 million on lobbying at state legislatures.

The National Conference of State Legislatures maintains a list of state regulations on lobbying by the public sector. Some states don't allow government agencies to spend public money to retain a lobbyist.

"This could mean that agencies have no designated representative to communicate with the legislature, but often this means that an agency may only use full-time employees in dealing with the legislative branch," NCSL states on a web page devoted to the topic. "Some states require agencies have a designated person to act as a liaison, while others provide for a special class of lobbyist. Other states' laws are completely silent on the matter."

# The Portland Observer

## Does I-5 Fix Fail on Equity?

*April 10, 2019*

### **In final comments, impacts on black community cited.**

Governmental leaders from Portland and Metro have thrown shade to a plan to expand a segment of I-5 to fix a bottle neck at the Rose Quarter saying the Oregon Department of Transportation failed to address equity issues when studying the project, including the impact to a black population which was displaced from the area and would return under a new vision for the neighborhood.

As the public comment period on the highway construction project came to a close last week, Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly called for a more extensive review of the impacts of the proposed \$500 million renovation, joining a large number of voices critical of the project, including the Portland School Board, and environmental and community groups.

The project involves adding merging lanes, capping the freeway in a small portion of the 1.7 mile area, and adding two new pedestrian and bike bridges spanning the freeway.

It has gained criticism in part due to the proposed auxiliary lanes cutting even closer to the hillside near Harriet Tubman Middle School which serves a large African American community and already experiences pollutants outside due to traffic congestion. ODOT has claimed that the project would improve air quality because it would keep traffic moving.

“Although it would be nice to fix the bottleneck on I-5 and the project includes \$250 million for surface street improvements focused on better pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure, as it stands the added auxiliary lanes on I-5 will not deliver meaningful safety, environmental, or equity benefits to Portland,” Eudaly said.

In a letter addressed to ODOT Commission Chair Tammy Baney, and co-signed by Mayor Ted Wheeler, Metro Council President Lynn Peterson called for ODOT to adopt a racially sensitive approach to proceeding with the project, citing the hundreds of families and businesses that were displaced in the 1950s in the predominately black Albina neighborhood during I-5’s original construction.

Peterson also backs Albina Vision Trust, a volunteer group seeking to re-develop the community of lower Albina with the construction of affordable housing and new public plazas, and other measures.

“[The highway project] is a once-in-generation opportunity to build over the divisive, trenched highway and reconnect inner east Portland neighborhoods to the Willamette River. Let’s take the opportunity to fix the problem that was created when I-5 was originally construct,” Albina Vision chair Rukaiyah Adams said in her own letter, in which she also called for an environmental impact statement from ODOT.