

# E – OUTLOOK

ENVIRONMENTAL HOT TOPICS AND LEGAL UPDATES

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*Editor's Note: Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) alone.*

## ***2021 Legislative Session: The Oregon Legislature Goes (Mostly) Virtual***

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The 2021 Legislative Long Session is now underway, but with many changes. Like many of us, COVID-19 is impacting the way the Legislature is able to do its business. Today and for the foreseeable future, the Capitol Building is closed to the public and all committee hearings are done virtually. This has changed how the public can engage the Legislature. Nevertheless, a system has been put in place that will provide the public with the opportunity to engage in the lawmaking process. You can read more about the Capitol Safety plan [here](#).

The Oregon Constitution requires that Legislators cast Senate and House Floor Votes in-person, on the respective floors. According to Legislative Counsel, committee votes can be done virtually. Both the House and Senate have made changes to their rules to reflect these challenges in a virtual environment. Some of the highlights include:

- More notice for public hearings
- Separating public hearings with work sessions
- Advance notice of amendments and amendment language
- Limited floor sessions

### **How to Testify**

Public testimony is still encouraged. There are two ways to provide testimony: (1) in-person by video or phone, and (2) in writing. The Legislature produced a helpful document describing the process for providing in-person testimony ([here](#)). In addition,

committees accept public testimony in writing through committee portals that can be found on the Oregon Legislative Information System ([here](#)). This process has had mixed success, including prior to the third special session of 2020, when approximately 100 Oregonians testified by audio and/or video in six hours of public hearings and submitted about 550 pieces of written testimony.

## **Legislative Calendar**

For the next few months, Legislative Leadership expects a regular Committee hearing schedule Monday – Thursday with occasional Friday hearings. The House and Senate will convene approximately once per week for the first month (or so) to do business that cannot be done remotely (like introduce bills). Then, once the Committees begin to pass bills that will require floor votes, the Legislature is expected to meet more often. The current calendar anticipates daily floor sessions beginning in early April. Until then, it is expected that most Legislators will be doing the people’s work remotely.

## **Key Dates**

Here are some of the key dates for the 2021 Legislative Session:

- February 23rd: Measure Introduction Deadline
- March 19th: Work Session must be posted (noticed)
- April 13th: First Chamber Work Session Deadline
- May 14th: Work Session must be posted (noticed)
- May 28th: Second Chamber Work Session Deadline
- June 27th: Constitutional Sine Die