

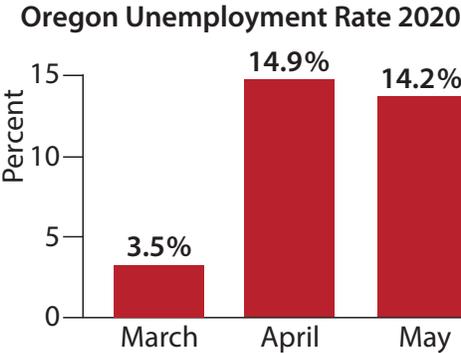


A moment of crisis and of opportunity

What was initially only a public health crisis is now the largest economic crisis in decades. At the same time, a mass movement is rising to demand the end of police violence against Black Americans.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed deep structural weaknesses in many of the public systems that we rely on for our physical, social, and economic health. While they present a threat to Oregonians who are already struggling just to get by, the interrelated crises of public health,

widespread unemployment, and racism also offer an opportunity to steer our state and nation in a more equitable direction.



The support of hundreds of organizations, businesses, and individuals throughout the state has enabled the Center to advocate for an

equitable response to the economic crisis. **Because of that support, we can champion urgently needed systemic change that begins to dismantle inequitable and racist policies.**

Fighting for those left out of federal relief

The Center’s research and analysis helped our partners advocate for the Oregon Workers Relief Fund (OWRF), designed to provide income

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Because facts matter.



replacement for workers who have lost their jobs yet are excluded from Unemployment Insurance and federal assistance due to their immigration status. To explain the importance of properly funding the OWRP to legislators, we co-produced a short video with our partners and co-authored an op-ed in the *Portland Tribune*. So far, the state has allocated \$20 million to the fund.

Improving Unemployment Insurance to better protect Oregonians

As pandemic shutdowns led to massive layoffs, the Center sprang into action. Our work explained the changes needed in Oregon's Unemployment Insurance system to better protect workers and their families. One area we pushed was the elimination of the outdated requirement of forcing workers to wait one week to receive unemployment benefits. We argued that this change would help laid-off workers, whose bills don't pause for one week, and also maximize federal assistance for the state. Our efforts succeeded, as the governor announced that the state agency would eliminate the one-week waiting rule. The Center first called for this change over 10 years ago, showing that sometimes it takes persistence and the right moment to make meaningful progress.

Advocating for adequate funding for vital services

Our work is often proactive, proposing new policy solutions intended to bring about more equitable outcomes for Oregonians. Other times, we play defense, pushing back against policies that would expand the inequities and harm vulnerable communities. Our work on the state's revenue shortfall has used both strategies.

The Center fought back when corporate special interests pushed for broad, poorly-targeted, tax breaks that would have further eroded resources for Oregon's schools. We argued that the state must protect working families by rejecting these proposals. With our research as a foundation, we organized partners (pulling together 40 organizations to sign on to a letter to the governor), and published an op-ed in the *Sunday Oregonian*. Efforts have, so far, been successful, as the governor announced that she will not delay the Corporate Activities Tax by executive order.

On the proactive side, we've argued that the state must protect essential services, especially those that support the most vulnerable. And that instead of balancing the budget by cutting services all Oregonians depend on, lawmakers should cut spending on the rich and corporations. We've highlighted a number tax breaks to wealthy Oregonians, totaling hundreds of

millions of dollars, that the legislature ought to eliminate to help close the revenue shortfall.

Advocating for a common-sense federal response

Unlike Oregon, the federal government can run a deficit. Because of this fact, Congress plays an essential role in responding to the economic recession. The Center has worked with national partners in pushing Congress to enact effective economic stimulus that prioritizes the needs of working families. Arguing that the federal response must be urgent, robust and ongoing, the Center has advocated for federal aid to states to protect public services, expanding healthcare coverage, rent assistance, and putting significant money into the pockets of Oregonians.

Looking ahead, the Oregon Center for Public Policy will fight to change the policy structures that create barriers to opportunity for Black, Indigenous and other communities of color in our state. We will work to rebuild the system in an equitable way, where everyone, not just the wealthy can thrive. Thank you for joining us in this fight.



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