

Governor signs law to strengthen workplace safety for firefighters, police & public safety employees

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

This week Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski was joined by firefighters, law enforcement officers and other public safety employees to sign Senate Bill 400 into law, which reinstates fire fighters, police and corrections officers' ability to negotiate for increased safety and staffing measures in their collective bargaining agreements. "Every day in Oregon, workers leave their homes and go to their jobs, putting themselves in harm's way to serve their state and provide for their families," Governor Ted Kulongoski said. "By signing this legislation today, labor and management will work together to ensure the safety of Oregon's public workplaces by identifying and eliminating hazards, providing practical training and, most importantly, involving all employees in safe and healthy work practices." Prior to 1995, state collective bargaining negotiations included safety and staffing issues for particular public employees, including firefighters, police officers and guards at correctional institutions and mental health hospitals. In 1995, the Legislature changed the law from mandatory to voluntary. Senate Bill 400 reinstates collective bargaining for safety issues or staffing levels that have an impact on the on-the-job safety of employees. "This bill was a long time coming" and I want to recognize the legislative leaders who broke the decade-long gridlock to make sure our public employees have the safety protections they deserve," the Governor continued. "I don't see this legislation as the end" I hope that it is a beginning of a new era of cooperation and increased vigilance to keep Oregon's public workers safe and on the job."

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