



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OREGON

Legislative Report

May 12, 2015

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2015 Legislative Session

In This Issue

[GOVERNANCE](#)

[NATURAL RESOURCES](#)

[SOCIAL POLICY](#)

**Printer-Friendly
Version**

League Victory!

**Governor Signs
Firearms Safety
Act, SB 941, into
Law**
**At 2:30 p.m., Monday,
May 12.**

This landmark legislation was made possible through the passion and hard work of gun safety advocates. The League's Action member, Marge Easley, is one who in conjunction with members of such groups as the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety helped make SB 941 reach the governor's desk.

**[Read Marge Easley's,
LWVOR Action Team
Member, testimony](#)**

Governance

Constitutional Property Tax Amendment, Public Records, and more

Measures #5 (1990) and #50 (1997) Limits Proposal

When **Measure #47 (1996)**, a controversial constitutional property tax limitation initiative (passed 704,554 to 642,613) came into play for implementation in the 1997 legislative session, legislators agreed that it would not work as passed. They spent three months reworking it and sent **Measure #50** to voters in a May, 1997 Special Election where many fewer voters cast ballots (429,943 to 341,781), the totals reflecting citizen concerns. These measures have subsequently caused significant funding problems for counties, cities, school districts and special districts. One problem, **requiring a 50% turnout, and a greater than 50% passage, was solved in 1998 through the passage of a constitutional amendment.**

Currently, and for some years, the Measure #50 consequences of using fair market value instead of assessed value in property taxation along with the **Measure #5 (1990)** property tax limits of \$5 per \$1000 of assessed value, and all local governments together limited to \$10 per \$1000, have created **property tax inequities and severe cuts to local education, health care and public safety programs.** Measure #50 froze county permanent tax rates at their 1995 level, a significant part of service declines. Also, compression issues among the local entities competing for local option tax funding have caused lower than anticipated dollars. To no avail, local government representatives have urged legislative action for several sessions.



*Kappy Eaton,
Governance
Coordinator*

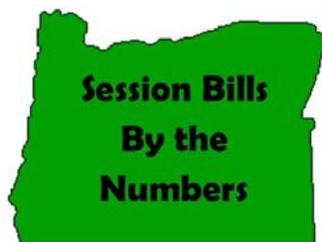
given during the marathon hearing on this bill.

Revenue Forecast May 14, 2015

Many bills in Ways and Means will not be acted upon until the Forecast from the [Office of Economic Analysis](#) is released.

Click here to Read the [February 19, 2015 Forecast](#)

1,988 House bills were referred to committee, to date 747 (or 37.6 %) of those have been vetted and found worthy to continue their journey being passed out of a house committee.



Total Measures Introduced -
2,761
Passed by House - 426
Passed by Senate - 385
Signed by Governor - 48

[HB 2666](#)

What is best for Oregon farmland?

The League strongly opposed the bill that would alter key criteria to allowing mines on EFU land and "shift balance

[HJR 21](#) is a constitutional amendment to require that all counties have a permanent limit on the rate of ad valorem property taxes of not less than \$2. Ten counties, almost a third of Oregon's 36 counties, have operating and local option tax rates of less than \$2. These include Columbia, Lane, Klamath, Polk, Clatsop, Hood River, Douglas, Coos, Josephine and Curry. The proposal removes the application of constitutional limits of Measure #5 to the first \$2 per \$1000, and requires compression of county option taxes first, followed by permanent taxes. **The measure would be on the May 2016 primary ballot and go into effect after July 1, 2016. The first hearing was held on May 6 in the House Revenue committee, with subsequent referral to House Rules.** Related bills are [HJR 20](#) and [HJR 12](#), both constitutional amendments also dealing with revising Measure #50. They have been referred to House Rules.

Governance Issues Updates

[SB 9](#), the comprehensive performance audit of Oregon's public records laws, passed the Senate, 30-0, and has been referred to House Rules where passage is also expected. [HB 3505](#), the Republican public records proposal, had a hearing in House Rules, but will not move.

Ethics bill [HB 2019A](#), proposing an increase in Oregon State Ethics Commission membership and tighter response times to complaints, has passed from House Rules to Ways and Means. [HB 2020](#) which defines Oregon statewide public officials to include a First Partner and prohibits receiving any reimbursement for public speaking, is scheduled for a hearing and possible work session in House Rules May 13. These are two of the Governor's bills.

[HB 3475](#), **National Popular Vote Compact**, had a work session on May 11, and is up for a House vote within the week.

Campaign finance contribution limits, [SJR 5](#), is still in Senate Rules with no action since the April 21 hearing.

The minimum wage bills, HBs [2008](#), [2009](#) and [2012](#), each phasing in increases in the next two years, have moved to House Rules, but no hearings have been scheduled.

The Joint Tax Credits committee has now had hearings on **20 credit programs scheduled to sunset in the next two years**. Among these are children and the elderly with disabilities, contributions to the Office of Child Care, university venture development, medical

and overly favor the mining industry."* League and other opposition were met with powerful Aggregate Industry interests wanting to push this bill through on the fast track.

(This bill is currently in House Rules)

****Click here to read LWVOR testimony in OPPOSITION.***

Legislative Bill Work Session Deadlines:

05/22 - Deadline to post 2nd chamber work sessions

06/05 - Last day to hold work sessions for 2nd chamber.

ACTION ALERT SB 680

**National
Popular Vote** ✓

Your involvement is needed. Senate Leadership is holding up a vote on this bill.

[Read how you can help.](#)

Support the Action Committee!



Please show your appreciation of the Action Committee and the Legislative Administrator

care to residents of the Oregon Veteran's Home, rural medical care, and long term care insurance premiums. The Ways and Means committee has limited the amount of General Fund dollars available to continue these credits.

[Back to Top](#)

Natural Resources

Priority Bills, House and Ways and Means Bills - League Support and Opposition



Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

Except for "priority bills", each chamber's committees are now hearing bills that passed the other chamber. If amendments are made in the second chamber, they will have to return to the first chamber for "concurrence" or be sent to a joint committee to see if they can find agreement. Remember, bills must pass both chambers and be signed by the Governor before they become law.

Deadlines are looming. Bills need to be scheduled for a Work Session in their second chamber by May 22, sent to Rules, Revenue or Ways and Means or they "die". Then, by June 5, bills must pass out of the second chamber committee or be sent to one of those limited committees. By this time in the session, fewer bills will be sent for more work. The tentative end of session is June 26, but word is it will last at least until July 3. The Ways and Means Subcommittees are finishing work on agency budgets and will be moving to the policy bills that were sent their way. With expected increases in PERS costs, in Medicaid and in public employee health care costs, the Co-Chairs are being conservative as they consider spending requests.

The Ways and Means Capital Construction Subcommittee is meeting every Friday to hear requests for state bonds or other special funding requests. Besides higher education buildings, county courthouses, affordable housing bonding and water bonds are among the mix of "asks". (See [HB 5005](#) and [HB 5006](#) for the complete list.)

Bills in House Rules we SUPPORT: [HB 3549](#) is the promised "aerial spray work group" bill. We are hoping for amendments to strengthen the bill to address the issues from the now-dead [SB 613](#).

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it possible to carry out this
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for the 2015 Legislative
Session
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[LWVOR Action Team](#)

State Bonding Capacity

For the 2015-17 biennium, the maximum recommended General Fund capacity is \$974 million and lottery bonding capacity is \$161 million. Both are less than the requests. Although our bond rating is AA+, factors that affect our rating include the Kicker Law, the volatility of our personal income tax and our active initiative process. Capital Construction informational hearing was held March 20th.

Information on bond financing: [State Bond Financing in Oregon](#) from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)

[Overview of the 2015 Debt Policy Advisory Commission Report](#)

[LWVOR Battle Front!](#)
[Read the Issues on Social Policy, Governance and](#)

[HB 3470 A](#), the **Climate Stability and Justice Act 2015**, is expected to move to Ways & Means before a full House vote. Major coalition building is in process. Expect in the next three weeks that a major effort will be rolled out. A lot of conversations have been heating up. The League's coalition partners are in conversation with Leadership. Expect some new organizing tools. I do encourage folks to read this bill and contact House Leadership.

Bills moved to Ways and Means that we SUPPORT: [SB 246 A](#) - onsite septic loan program, [SB 266 A](#) - place based water planning, [HB 2633 A](#) - natural hazards planning, [SB 830 A](#) - suction dredge mining, [SB 952 A](#) - task force on natural resource agencies-funding and efficiencies. With each of these bills, the Ways and Means Committee will need to weigh these requests for funding and their policies against current programs and funding needs.

Bills moved to Ways and Means that we OPPOSE: [HB 3089 A](#) - relating to mining.

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator; Claudia Keith, Climate Change Portfolio; Jennifer Haynes, Forests and Pesticides Portfolios; Marge Easley, Land Use and Aggregate/Mining Portfolio

[Back to Top](#)

[Social Policy](#)

Health Care and Human Services Committees; District Attorney and Public Defense Budgets; Education and Youth Budgets and Programs



Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

The **Senate Health Care Committee** (SHC) met twice this week and passed [HB 3517 A](#) to provide medical care for all children in the state. House Health Care leaders testified in support of health care for all children in our schools and state. The bill would cover foreign visitors and immigrants who are not eligible for Medicaid. There was no fiscal impact statement as the bill says if funds are available. The bill was sent to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation and a referral to Ways and Means.

[Natural Resources as captured by our LWVOR Coordinators.](#)

Bill Trackers

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The Guides provide pictures and information about each legislator, as well as information about Committee Staff.

Next week the SHC Committee has scheduled **[HB 2934 A](#)**, the basic health plan, for a public hearing, the next step in the expansion of health care coverage under the present system. The bill requires the **Oregon Health Authority** to convene a stakeholder group to provide recommendations to the interim legislative health care committees by December 1, 2015. The bill passed the House floor with a 39 - 21 vote. **[HB 2828](#)**, the extension of the study bill, was sent to Ways and Means for funding and has not been scheduled for a hearing so far. **[SB 631](#)** had a public hearing in SHC Committee on Monday. This bill would have appointed a Health Care for all Board. Many advocates were heard but the bill could not be passed out of the Senate Committee at this late date.

The **House Human Services Committee** heard **[HB 3535](#)**, the TANF Redesign bill, on April 20. A workgroup submitted a detailed amendment to make changes to the program to make eligibility clearer, to refer for services prior to eligibility, to provide training for employment, and offer the extension of services to clients who became employed. The population on TANF has been decreasing as recipients have gone back to work, but many had difficulties with that transition. The redesign continues services during the transition. The bill was amended but needed further work. On May 8, the bill was scheduled for a hearing in House Rules when it was again amended and passed with a referral to Ways and Means. A letter was submitted to House Rules in support of the redesign. ([Read letter here.](#))

The **Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee** considered **[HB 2232 A](#)** on May 7. The Department of Human Services is responsible for services for Runaway and Homeless Youth and the bill creates an advisory committee to inform planning and coordination of services. The bill originally appeared in the House on February 20, was amended and passed early. The House floor approved with 57 ayes to 3 nays. **The bill was moved to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation.** A letter was submitted to the Feb 20 hearing and to the Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee on March 3, including comments on Runaway and Homeless Youth.

The **Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee** reviewed the **District Attorney Budget**, **[HB 5015](#)**, and **Public Defense Services Commission Budget** **[SB 5533](#)** last week. The District Attorney Budget includes the salaries for 36 District Attorneys with a 7 % increase. The Budget was passed to the Full Ways and Means Committee. The PDSC Budget presentation



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your responsibility to
vote.



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was detailed, with many needs and options, and was not yet moved out of the Public Safety Sub.

In the 2013 Session the **[Public Defense Services Commission \(PDSC\)](#)** presented the needs for increased salaries for court appointed attorneys for eligible children or defendants. The League submitted a letter arguing the access to justice issue, then (HB3463 (2013)). A minimal hourly increase was granted, and a 3% increase was given in the rates for lawyers in consortiums and firms on a per case basis. The defense attorney salary levels are below parity compared with deputy district attorneys. Defense attorneys also pay for their own insurance and benefits. PDSC presented policy option packages for increased case rates and mileage at \$7.5 million, increased hourly rates at \$6.6 million and administrative staff for Juvenile Dependency Improvement at \$313,870, for a total of approximately \$14 million in General Funds. The Public Safety Subcommittee will be considering this need along with other agency requests.

The **Oregon Youth Authority Budget, [SB 5542](#)**, presented estimates on construction and deferred maintenance needs in its 10 correctional facilities. The original estimate for projects at all facilities was \$47.9 million, but it was reduced to \$3.3 million for projects at 3 facilities, MacLaren, Oak Creek and Rogue Valley. Hillcrest in South Salem will close by July 1, 2017, and renovations at MacLaren in Woodburn will allow for intake and mental health units on its campus. The committee discussed the low interest rates on bonds and the wisdom of bonding now for the projects. No decision was made yet. The League submitted a letter on the OYA Budget on Feb 25. (**[Click here to read Karen Nibler's testimony.](#)**)

The **Department of Education** reported to the Ways and Means Education Subcommittee on the Youth Correction Education Program and the Youth Development Division Programs. ODE contracts with Education Service Districts and School Districts to provide education within the Oregon Youth Authority correctional facilities. The education is provided to 440 students, which is a daily average. The high school graduation rate is increasing to 48% and testing scores are improving in reading, but remain under 50% in science, writing and math. Vocational programs are available in the facilities and higher education classes are available online. **[SB 240](#)** will allow OYA to add apprenticeship programs.

The **Youth Development Division** funds prevention programs for at risk children ages 6 to 18. The Priority Youth programs for ages 6-15 are for children at risk of disconnecting from school, which targets economically

disadvantaged youth. Opportunity Youth programs are for 16-20 year olds who are not in school or working. This agency distributed \$3 million for 22 intervention programs. Applications for 48 programs were received, but Federal Funds were sequestered for 2014 through 2017. [HB 2016](#) was amended and adopted in House Rules on May 8. This bill requests an educational plan to address the educational low performance in economically disadvantaged black students.

The **House Education Committee** received detailed presentations on both of these programs on the same day as the **Ways and Means Education Subcommittee** met. The House Committee also passed [SB 321](#) to lower the mandatory school age from 7 to age 6 for Kindergarten. [SB 553 A](#) and [SB 556](#) were also passed to the Senate floor. [SB 553 A](#) limits suspension and expulsion from public schools, and [SB 556](#) prohibits the use of expulsion for truancy. Both of these practices contribute to school dropout rates. These bills reflect changes in Early Learning and Youth Development Divisions.

[Back to top](#)

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