



Legislative Report

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Governance

Voter Registration Issues: Age 16 and Access



Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

The House Rules committee will discuss three voter registration bills on March 13 that are on the Secretary of State's priority list:

- [HB 2017](#) would allow a person without a valid DMV driver's license or state identification card to update voter registration electronically by supplying the last four digits of elector's Social Security number,
- [HB 2988](#) would allow sixteen year olds to register, and
- [HB 3175](#) directs universities and community colleges to increase voter registration access and information.

Under its positions, the League will [testify](#) in support of these efforts to engage more young people in the political and government processes.

Two other bills, [HB 2198](#) and [HB 3027](#) regarding voter address changes, are expected to be heard on March 18.

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Oregon's Redistricting Process: Cool Reception



[HB 2686](#) and [HJR 17](#), the proposals for an independent redistricting commission to redraw Oregon's legislative boundaries every 10 years, received a lukewarm reception on March 4. The measure and its accompanying constitutional amendment takes the redistricting process out of the Legislature's hands, and that idea was not well accepted by the House Rules committee

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members. The change was supported by the Portland City Club, LWVOR ([testimony](#)), AARP and Common Cause Oregon.

Another bill, [HB 2887](#), that would have a panel of retired judges do the Congressional district reapportionment, was presented by committee chair Representative Garrett. While members of the committee agreed that legislators did not always get it right, they were satisfied that the Legislature could do a good job as in 2011 and didn't see any compelling reason to change.

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Kicker and Compression Opportunities: Bold or Timid Response

As noted in [Legislative Report # 5](#), ([HJR 3](#), [HJR 4](#), [HJR 11](#), [HJR 12](#)), the House Revenue committee has heard several proposals to enhance reserve funds through constitutional amendments that would provide monthly deposits to a Rainy Day Fund and increase the percentage of personal income tax surplus needed to trigger a return to tax payers. Discussion did not indicate a strong support for any of the suggestions to override the negative General Fund effects of the 2% refund kicker requirement.

Since then, the House Revenue Committee has listened to witnesses addressing the fiscal problems for school districts, cities and counties caused by the property tax limitations in Measure 5 (1990) and Measure 50 (1997). The pertinent proposals, [HJR 7](#), [HJR 8](#), [HJR 13](#), [HJR 19](#) and [HJR 20](#), address various ways of assisting the need for additional revenue at the local level to combat rising costs and the inability to gain the total dollars of levies passed by voters because of the compression factor in Measure 5. Equally difficult is the inequity caused by the issue of the difference between assessed property value and true market value in residential neighborhoods. The bills propose such remedies as a \$7.50 per \$1000 (now \$5) for school taxes and/or allowing local governments bringing option *ad valorem* tax measures to be exempted from the Measure 50 limits.

Again, the committee members' questions indicated a reluctance to really consider the problems being raised. We will be watching closely go see if these measures or other alternatives move forward. Both the state and local governments need to allow voters to make decisions.

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You won't want to miss

Day at the Legislature April 10th

Montag Den,
Willamette University,
Salem

Invited speakers include
Secretary of State
Kate Brown,
Representative Jessica
Vega Pederson,
Senator Alan Bates, and
Craig Prinz, Executive
Director, Oregon
Criminal Justice
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Attend hearings at 8am,
1pm or 3pm
Workshop, lunch and
speakers
10am - 1pm

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Join Oregon League of Conservation Voters for Environmental Lobby Day

March 21
9:00am - 4:30pm

Willamette Heritage
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University Governance: The Grand Scheme Emerges

First, on March 8, we learned of the massive amendments to [HB 2149](#) and [SB 270](#) that spell out establishing individual university boards of directors and provide process and procedures for increased fiscal authority as well as accountability. Then Ben Cannon, the Governor's Education Policy staff person, outlined to the House Higher Education and Workforce committee the goals and outline of [HB 3120](#), a massive restructure of the Oregon public elementary, high school and higher education system. The redesign focuses on student success to meet the goals of 40-40-20. There will be more fluid movement between the high school and university programs, and the controlling entities will be the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) and the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC).



Coordination and cooperation are key elements. Tuition setting and the authority of the larger individual universities (UO, OSU, PSU) to have boards, with the regional universities under the supervision of OEIB is spelled out. The 17 Community colleges will keep their own boards. Many of the current education commissions and boards will be merged with the OEIB overseeing generally the P-20 organization, including the Early Learning Council, and the HECC handling the community colleges and universities. The universities with local boards will send their proposed budgets and their annual compacts to the HECC with no legislative contact.

More details will be forthcoming as the Senate and House committees hold informational sessions.

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Ways & Means Budget: Challenges Ahead

Calling it [Oregon's Turning Point Budget](#), the co-chairs of the Ways and Means committee presented, on March 4, their 2013-15 proposed Budget for legislative discussion and debate. Based on the March 2013 Revenue forecast for the next biennium, the General Fund budget expects total resources of \$16,442.8 billion. Some of the revenue comes from a \$49.2 million reduction in sun setting tax credits and \$19.5 million from rebalancing. The program area expenditures and



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add-backs, not included in expenditures, bring an expenditures total of \$16,513.6 billion. The budget thus has assumed resources of \$275 million needed to actually balance as required by the Constitution.

Recovery and reinvestment are the key themes in education, human services, and public safety, as well as natural resources, judicial and transportation areas. Current funding for the sun-setting Earned Income, Cultural Trust and Farm Workers Housing through extending the tax credits is recommended to the Joint Tax Credits committee. Expansion of these or other tax credits must come from reductions or elimination of other current credits or new sources of revenue.

Some specifics:

- K-12: \$6.75 billion, up from the Governor's budget of \$6.22 billion, using \$200 million from PERS savings and targeted tax expenditures (tax credits, deductions).
- Funding levels in the Governor's budget, \$1.902 billion, for universities, community colleges, other education.
- Human Services funding, \$4.261 billion, up \$8.8 million, includes restoration of TANF eligibility, increases in children's, teens' and young adults' mental health services, Medicaid expansion to cover 220,000 more Oregonians and support for the Oregon Health Authority from renewed hospital self-assessment.
- Public safety funding, \$2.805 billion, up \$6.1 million, depends on savings from reductions and reforms recommended by the Joint Committee on Public Safety, related to curbing the prison population, and funds from the Tobacco Settlement Agreement. Savings will be reinvested in Community Corrections programs.
- Natural Resources funding, \$334 million, up \$10 million.
- Administration funding, \$204 million, down \$7.1 million.
- Judicial funding, \$64.6, up \$9 million.
- Transportation funding, \$98 million, up \$31.3 million.

PERS savings would come from a cost of living adjustment (COLA) saving \$400 million, and ending the tax assistance payments to out-of-state retirees, gaining about \$55 million. These savings reduce the public employers PERS costs from 4.9% of payroll to 2.4% of payroll. After "collaring" 2.9% of the savings in Ways and Means, the total savings would \$350 million. The anticipated ending balanced for 2013-15 is estimated at \$130 million, and the Reserve Funds, Rainy Day and Education Stability are

Contact the
[LWVOR Action Team](#)

estimated to be \$246.4 million and \$185.8 respectively.



The haggling and debating will now commence and continue until after the June revenue forecast, set for May 16, on which the final budget is based. Leaders hope to *sine die* by June 28, but the session can continue until July 13 by law.

NOTE: The co-chairs budget is from the two Democratic leaders. The Republican differences can be found in Senator Richardson's March 8 [Newsletter](#) on line.

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Social Policy

Early Learning Presentation to House Human Services

Monday, March 4, the House Human Services Committee had a panel presentation from the Early Learning Council (ELC) Board and Duke Shephard from the Governor's Office. The presentation covered the history leading up to the appointment of the ELC Board and data which fuels the vision and work. Duke had a [slide presentation](#), attached, including action on Kindergarten-readiness, Race to Top, and Tiered Rating for Child Care.



Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

The legislators had many questions and will have additional hearings. The take away is that counties will not get much in way of administrative funds for the first six months of next biennium. The hubs will have less than 15% admin and some programs only allow smaller percentages of pass-through funds.

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Housing Bills Pop Up

The House Human Services Committee includes Housing this session, which is a good fit because Housing is essential for a stable life. Representative Kotek sponsored [HB 2639](#), which relates to renting and the use of Section 8



vouchers. Many housing advocates appeared at the March 6 hearing in support of the bill, and a few property managers presented opposition. The bill already has amendments and will be rescheduled.

[HB 2417](#) proposes to increase the Document Recording Fee by \$5 to finance veterans housing. The bill was proposed by Representatives Whisnant, Matthews, and Parrish. Central Oregon veterans' advocates drove over the mountains to testify on this bill, which will also be rescheduled.

[HB 2316](#) proposed statutory changes to the Individual Development Accounts initiated in 1999. This program encourages saving for education, home repairs, technology or small business with a funding match. Eligibility is limited to those below 200% of the poverty level. Legislators had many questions and future action was not decided at the hearing.

[HB 2388A](#) was heard again on March 8 when advocates explained that the proposal was to expand the Oxford House model to house domestic violence victims. The Oxford model can provide housing for \$400 a year per bed including rent, utilities and household incidentals. A work session passed the bill to Ways and Means with the approval of members present at the hearing.

[HB 2980](#), related to the extension of Farmworker Housing tax credits, was heard on March 8. The Agriculture Workforce Housing Coalition, based in Woodburn, presented information from advocates in support of this extension. Farmworker Housing projects have been developed in Marion, Washington, Jefferson, and the Columbia River area. The bill will be scheduled for a work session next week.

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Public Safety Budgets

The Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee heard [HB 5007](#), the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) Budget, on March 5. This agency provided staff for the 2011 and 2012 Commissions on Public Safety and has presented the PEW findings and recommendations to the current Legislative Committee. The League [supports](#) this agency's budget and its work on the public safety recommendations.

An Informational Presentation on Drug Courts by the CJC was scheduled for the last Joint Committee on Public Safety Wednesday evening, but the hearing was cancelled.

Additional bills, [HB 3193](#), [HB 3195](#), [HB 3196](#) and [HB 3197](#)

wait for future hearing schedules.

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Oregon Judicial Department Asks for Salary Increases

The Chief Justice's requested budget included funds to restore staff and programs that were reduced in prior sessions. The Courts will continue to implement the development of the eCourt system for all judicial districts. Drug treatment courts in 10 districts were included. The cost of repairs to 5 county courthouses and exterior repair of the Oregon Supreme Court building are on the list.



The 2012 Session added a three judge panel to the Court of Appeals, but the funding of the 3 judges and 9 support staff are reflected in this biennium. A 2012 study by the National Center for State Courts ranks Oregon 45th among states in circuit court and Supreme Court Judges' salaries. The Chief Justice proposed increases for Circuit Court Judges from \$114,000 to \$137,000, with a higher range up to \$140,000 for State Tax Court, Appeals and Supreme Court Judges and \$152,000 for the Chief Justice. The Judges salaries in [HB 2563](#) were heard in House Judiciary and passed to Ways and Means for a decision along with the Oregon Justice Department (OJD) Budget, [HB 5016](#). The League has supported the OJD Budget in past sessions.

Public Defense Services has requested an increase in defense attorney hourly rates from \$45 to \$53 an hour and from \$60 to \$72 an hour for death penalty cases. The Public Defense Services Commission (PDSC) contracts with consortiums and private organizations for defense services. The agency has staff attorneys for the Appellate Division and Juvenile Dependency cases and requests salary increases and additional staff.

The **District Attorneys** Budget only covers the salary of the elected District Attorneys in 36 counties and this budget has remained flat. The base pay for a DA is \$90,972 with a higher base of \$107,952 for 9 counties with over 100,000 in population. This budget even eliminated the Services and Supplies funding in an attempt to keep its costs down. The counties provide funding for Deputy District Attorneys and some provide additional salary for the elected DA. The Department of Justice provides funding for child support enforcement and crime victim services.

The Department of Justice provides legal counsel for the state, criminal conviction assistance to district attorneys, crime victims' services, child support enforcement, and consumer protection. The budget requests an increase of \$24 an hour for assistant attorney services resulting, in a \$167 an hour charge to agencies. The budget includes funds for the defense of the Tobacco Master Settlement which brings in revenue for health services and tobacco prevention programs.

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Natural Resources

Of Parks and Rivers

Last week the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's (OPRD) budget was reviewed, [HB 5034](#). Lottery funds are not increasing; lottery is expected to upgrade its video games, causing a reduction in dollars available for OPRD.



Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

We've added a new park a year lately. The cost of providing facilities for these new parks and continuing to maintain current parks was a discussion, although they have reduced their over \$140 million in maintenance backlog to around \$20 million. OPRD is discussing "divesting" itself of some small parks properties, maybe to local governments, so it can concentrate on Oregon's iconic places. They do have limited funds in their budget in hopes of purchasing an additional 8,000 acres of land next to Cottonwood Canyon, the east moraine of Wallowa Lake and continuing the Rails to Trails from Vernonia to the coast.

Look for some modest fee increases in campsites to be more in line with other states and market rates.

[SB 331A](#) has been passed to Ways and Means. It would change the formula for RV license fee revenues to increase moneys to county parks and reduce OPRD's budget by \$3.2 million.

[SB 7](#) would change the governance of the State Fair and Expo facilities to a public corporation. Currently, although the Fair has been profitable (if you don't count the cost of facilities upkeep), the other 50 weeks those facilities are not fully utilized causes a deficit to OPRD. There is also a cost of bonding for the Expo building borne by OPRD. In [SB 5532](#), \$3.8 million of non-M76 lottery funds would be

transferred to OPRD to fund these facilities. If SB 7 is passed, the public corporation would take over management from OPRD by 2015.

A new "pass through" request was presented under the Governor's budget: using \$5 million of non-Measure 76 lottery bonds to help with the demolition and cleanup of the Willamette Falls property in Oregon City. The nexus with OPRD is that they house the Heritage Preservation Office and parts of this property and buildings are "historical".



Lastly, under public [testimony](#), Jonathan Manton of the Oregon Heritage Rivers Alliance asked that OPRD study and recommend additions to the state scenic rivers as required under state law. He shared the concern related to suction dredge mining and urged support for [SB 401](#).

League members should contact their [legislator](#) to support [SB 401](#) and ask that [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#) do an ongoing study of scenic rivers as required by law.

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Parks and Land Use

by Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

[SB 502](#) was heard on March 7th. This bill would have removed parks from the state land use system. The League supports parks. We also [support](#) good land use planning and understand that rules are necessary to regulate where parks are located and what can be done in parks.

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Industrial Lands

by Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

Industrial lands are at the top of economic development discussions this session. On March 8, the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development heard [HB 2657](#), which attempts to address the issue of industrial lands being rezoned for other uses. The League will watch this bill and may weigh in to support it because we know that loss of industrial lands is an important economic issue.

[HB 2284](#) and [HB 2285](#) are meant to provide loan or grant funds to help with assessing current industrial lands for salability and to help provide infrastructure. The League has concerns about using public funds for private investment.

We will be watching these bills to see if amendments improve these bills to meet League positions.

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Forward, Backward or Sideways?

by Theresa Gibney, Natural Resources Volunteer

This week, key energy bills are expected to take their final shape. An energy efficiency bill is being worked that will combine [HB 2801](#) (maximizing energy savings from a building by allowing all projects to be incented if they are cost effective as a whole) and [HB 2817](#) (ensuring that property appraisals value the energy efficiency attributes of a building); it will be called HB 2801. In addition, [HB 2893](#) (a bill to require an appropriate value to be paid for solar energy) is being worked. A broad range of stakeholders are working on amendments to these bills and, as always, the bills could be expanded, focused on fewer changes, or just be implemented in a slightly different way! Stay tuned for a request for last minute calls to your Legislators, if the bills go sideways!

[SB 692](#), a bill to align energy efficient standards with California's (and, perhaps, enable Washington to do the same) will be heard in the Senate this week.



The bill is finding support on both sides of the aisle. It marries the common sense ideas that we should accomplish any activity in the most cost effective way possible and that products in Oregon are as energy efficient as those of our California neighbors with a straightforward response to the threat of climate change. Efficiency standards would be applied, for the first time, to televisions, battery chargers, quartz halogen lamps, and plumbing fixtures. The League submitted [testimony](#) in support.

We ask League members to let their [legislators](#) know that they appreciate the bipartisan support building for this bill.

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Making Waves

by Theresa Gibney, Natural Resources Volunteer

Bills relating to wave energy have started on their way. With [HB 2694](#), Representative Boone proposed that the Department of State Lands require energy developers working in Oregon's oceans to share data they collect and to pay a fee to enable continued mapping of the territorial



sea.

At the end of March, the Senate will hear:

- [SB 606](#), a bill requiring wave energy developers to remove equipment upon cessation of the operation and for the State to compensate commercial fishermen for the loss of fishing grounds during the time that equipment is installed but not operational, and
- [SB 359](#), a bill changing the licensing process for wave energy facilities.

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More Waves

by Theresa Gibney, Natural Resources Volunteer

Bills that would change the way utility energy efficiency programs work are also scheduled for a hearing.

- [HB 2939](#) would require utilities to take on communications with customers about their energy usage compared to their neighbors.
- [SB 561](#) would establish utilities as businesses able to make a return on investment by making direct investments or providing loans to homes and businesses for more energy efficiency equipment, centralized utility control of building energy systems, or renewable energy generation.
- Programs could also be provided to low income residents. Programs similar to both HB 2939 and SB 561 are currently operated by non-profits and funded by the Public Purpose Charge and Energy Conservation Charge paid by ratepayers.

The League has not yet developed a position on these bills; if they advance, it will certainly make waves in the energy efficiency community.

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