



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OREGON

Legislative Report

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Governance

The Whirlwind 78th Oregon Assembly . . . Ethics (and the Governor), Road Fund, Popular Vote and more.



*Kappy Eaton,
Governance
Coordinator*

As the fifth week of the 78th Oregon Assembly begins, there is barely time to catch your breath from the whirlwind that engulfed the first four weeks. Starting February 2nd, the many House and Senate committees have held opening hearings on the almost 2000 bills that have been introduced. Some are on the fast track and headed for the Governor's signature. With comfortable majorities in both chambers, Democrats seem to be moving issues that were narrowly defeated in 2013. The National Popular Vote compact, [SB 680](#), and Motor Voter, [HB 2177](#), are cases in point.

Ethics Issues Getting Attention

Two of the three ethics bills heard in Senate Rules February 24 will be forwarded to the Senate floor. [SB 292](#) concerns conflict of interest provisions for planning commission members, and [SB 293](#) **expands the exemption** from gift limits regarding the admission, costs of food/drink for a relative accompanying a public official to a reception, meal or meeting. [SB 294](#), which would grant rule making authority to the **Oregon Government Ethics Commission**, brought vigorous discussion and a request for guidelines and possible amendments.

The resignation of the Governor and the ensuing investigations are prompting the drafting of several ethics proposals. They include a constitutional **amendment to allow the impeachment** of a governor, more timely release of public records, grant **additional power to the attorney general** for investigations, **limit the work of a governor's spouse** to ceremonial duties if the person had outside income, and give more independence from the

Advocacy Day March 12

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Meet the newly inaugurated Governor Kate Brown



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governor to the Ethics Commission members. **Oregon is the only state that has no mechanism for the Legislature to impeach, according to the National Association of Governors.**

Cigarette Discussions Heating Up

Proposed increases in the cigarette taxes in [HB 2555](#), from 30 mills to 80 mills per cigarette, brought arguments in favor from health officials, prevention supporters, and data on decreasing use. Opponents cited the targeting of low income smokers and smuggling. The Governor's proposed budget includes use of the increased taxes for investment. Cigarette tax revenue is distributed to cities, counties, an elderly and disabled transportation fund, the Oregon Health Plan, and credited to the Tobacco Use Reduction Account. Regulation of E-cigarettes, [SB 340](#), and flavored nicotine products, [SB 415](#), is being discussed in social policy committees, and will also be considered by the Revenue committees regarding taxation.

Road Fund Dollars

The impact of **decreasing public safety** funds in several counties during the depression caused the allowing of road funds to be used for sheriff patrols. [SB 26](#) repeals the sunset of the law requiring that the money be used solely for direct and indirect costs of patrolling. At the hearing in the Senate Finance and Revenue committee on February 25, the current law was strongly defended by county sheriffs. Of public interest was the informal, not on the record, discussion with all of the committee members and the witnesses after the committee adjourned.

[HB 2177, Motor Voter](#), (which passed the House 35-24) has been referred to the Joint Ways and Means Committee. You can track this bill at [e-subscribe](#).

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Social Policy

Health Care

[HB2828](#) - The Health Care Study Bill passed the House Health Care Committee Monday. Last session the Oregon Health Authority was empowered to contract for a study to examine at least four options for financing health care delivery in Oregon. The study had no state funding in the last session and failed



Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator



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to draw private funds in the past two years. Advocates are looking for a public-private partnership. The bill was referred to Ways and Means for funding.

[SB 336](#) and [SB 338](#) promote the expansion of school based health centers. The Senate Health Care Committee heard advocates proclaim a decrease in absenteeism, tardiness, and dropouts and an increase in grade point averages in schools with these clinics. The Oregon Health Authority reported that 68 school clinics are operating in 20 counties. A survey revealed that counties are interested in establishing 25 new clinics. Federal funds have been used to establish these clinics but state and local funds are also required. These bills contain an additional funding request.

[SB 18](#) seeks to repeal the antitrust exemption for coordinated care organizations. The bill sponsor was concerned about the lack of public transparency in coordinated care organizations' decisions. Without transparency, the ant-trust exemption should be removed. Health Insurance lobbyists objected. No action was taken on the bill this week in Senate Health Care, as reported by Jean Gallegher.

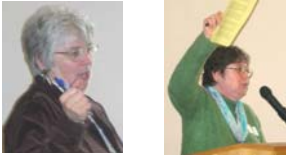
[HB 2557](#) relating to Psychiatric Review Board was sent to the Judiciary Committee. The PSRB supervises those Guilty Except for Insanity in the community in residential or independent placements. The bill asks PSRB to consider recovery and community integration in addition to protection of society. The Judiciary Committee will review the laws for the PSRB before the bill goes further.

Follow-up from last week, [HB 2546](#) on inhalant delivery systems passed out of House Health Care and will be on the House floor agenda soon. [Let your representatives know if you want the use of e-cigarettes and other inhalants regulated and not available to minors.](#)

Human Services and Housing

The Oregon Community and Housing Services Department Budget, [SB 5513](#), was heard in Ways and Means Transportation and Economic Development. The League submitted a letter in support of this agency programs, which offers rental assistance, energy assistance and emergency housing. The federal and state hunger programs had been managed in this agency and local community action agencies. It appears the administration of these programs will be transferred to Department of Human Services, but the food supplies will still be funneled through the Oregon Food Bank and local food banks. There should be no disruption in food services. [Read the League's letter.](#)

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Legislative budget writers want the revenue committees to squeeze \$64 million worth of expiring Oregon tax credits in \$14 million made available on their budget framework for the next two years.

[Click here to read Portland Tribune Article.](#)

Inclusionary zoning drew a big crowd to the Capitol on Monday, February 23, to hear arguments on [HB 2564](#). This bill gives community land use planning a tool to include affordable housing within larger developments. The majority testified in favor of the bill. League member Debbie Aiona from Portland submitted a [letter in support](#).

The Department of Human Services Budget, [HB 5026](#), has been presented to the Ways and Means Human Services Committee. Public Testimony was taken by the Joint SubCommittee on Human Services, Tuesday, March 3. [Read the testimony submitted](#). The House Human Services Committee held an Informational Hearing on poverty data this week. The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (TANF) has had a very low benefit level and a sharp drop off of benefits when a parent becomes employed. DHS is planning a **TANF Redesign to increase the TANF benefit and smooth the transition to work**. TANF beneficiaries qualify for food, housing and day care assistance programs, so the redesign will consider the impact of all these programs. Stay tuned.

Public Safety

The Oregon Youth Authority Budget, [SB 5542](#), was heard in Ways and Means Public Safety. The agency maintains 10 correctional facilities with two old facilities in Marion County. OYA plans to close one facility in South Salem and transfer residents to the larger Woodburn facility. The agency will need major bond funding to build and remodel in Woodburn. The population at the institutions has been decreasing because more juvenile offenders are placed in residential programs under OYA supervision. Research supports this trend. The League submitted a [letter in support](#) of current programs at the institutions and the bond funds to remodel one of the older facilities.

The Oregon Judicial Department Budget, [SB 5514](#), is scheduled for public hearings March 2-5. The Chief Justice has asked for salary increases for judges in state Circuit, Appellate and Supreme Courts in this budget. Judges had increases in the past biennium, but the salary levels are still below the private attorneys. [HB 2338](#) was heard in House Judiciary this week, and it was passed to Public Safety Ways and Means. The League submitted a [letter in support of HB 2338](#). Watch for more budget news next week.

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Natural Resources

Land Use Back Again

The League has strong positions in support of [Oregon's statewide land use planning program](#) with local implementation. We are especially protective of **Goal 1**, citizen involvement. This last week we testified against [SB 25](#), a bill that would allow 8 Eastern Oregon counties to "opt out" of the program. From testimony it was obvious that their purpose is to allow more rural residential homes. The League encourages these counties to focus on their cities and towns for needed development. We also provided testimony in opposition to [SB 86](#), which would allow firearms facilities outright on farm or forest lands.



Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

We provided oral testimony against [HB 2039](#), a bill to create a Task Force on the **Columbia River Gorge**. The hearing was positive since it brought up the very real need for more funding for the Gorge Commission. But creating a Task Force doesn't seem the best use of limited dollars when we already have a bi-state Commission.

Then we always have bills related to appeals fees. We testified in support of [SB 359](#) which would limit the fees charged to appeal to a local City Council or County Commission.

The League will be working with the Dept. of Environmental Quality and a broad range of legislators and stakeholders to try to set up a loan program to help **homeowners with failing septic systems** around the state. Watch for hearings on [SB 246](#) over the next few weeks.

Continuing our work on behalf of natural resource agency budgets, we provided testimony on [HB 5002](#), the Department of Agriculture budget. We targeted our testimony in support of water quality programs, support of the Invasive Species Council and against creation of an "alignment coordinator"-a new concept to have another layer helping agencies work together. Natural Resource Directors meet regularly, making this position unnecessary. Update on Clean Fuels, [SB 324](#): Passed out of House Committee on Energy and Environment to the full House with a "do pass" recommendation. Expect House floor vote this week.

Budgets the week of March 2: Oregon Parks and Rec Budget ([SB 5528](#)-public testimony Wednesday, March 4) and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board ([SB 5540](#) & [SB 5541](#)).

Our Watch List: [SB 534](#), [HB 2034](#), [HB 2267](#), [HB 2277](#), [HB 2295](#), [HB 2436](#), [HB 2443](#), [HB 2633](#), [HB 2666](#), [HB 2724](#), [HB 2881](#). For information about these bills, please read them at the Oregon Legislature website or contact Peggy Lynch: zuludar@aol.com

Climate Watch List: [SB 20](#), [SB 22](#), [SB 23](#), HB 2447. Coal to Clean: HB 2729 or SB 477. Carbon Tax: HB 2082. For information about these bills, please read them at the Oregon Legislature website or contact Claudia Keith: ca.keith@comcast.net

Forestry Watch List: [SB 257](#) and [SB 613](#). For information about these bills, please read them at the [Oregon Legislature website](#) or contact Jen Haynes: Jennifer.A.Haynes@comcast.net

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