



Dr. Alan Bates

Oregon Senate Majority Whip

House Calls Newsletter: Session Wrap-up

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Greetings!

After nearly six months of deliberation and negotiation, the 74th session of the Oregon State Legislature has come to a close, with many significant accomplishments. Thanks to the passage of groundbreaking legislation on a wide range of issues -from recycling and renewable energy to cigarettes and civil unions - this session may be remembered as one of the most successful in the past twenty years.

I was especially pleased that the Healthy Oregon Act (SB 329) passed the House and the Senate with broad, bipartisan support in the final weeks of the session. Now the state of Oregon has a road map for lowering healthcare costs, improving quality, and increasing access for all Oregonians.

The session may be over, but much of the real work is just beginning. The process begun by the Healthy Oregon Act must be completed and specific reforms developed in anticipation of the 2009 legislative session.

To those of you who called, e-mailed, or wrote to share your opinions with my office during this session, thank you. I look forward to hearing more from all of you as we enter the interim and begin looking toward the next session. As always, there is still important work to be done.

In health,

Dr. Alan Bates

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Governor Signs Healthy Oregon Act

Barney Speight appointed Executive Director of the Oregon Health Fund Board



On June 28th, the Governor signed the Healthy Oregon Act into law, creating a road map for reforming Oregon's health care system by lowering costs, improving outcomes, and ensuring that every Oregonian has access to affordable health care. I

was very happy that the bill passed with broad, bipartisan support.

When he signed the bill, Governor Kulongoski said, "Today we have new hope for a healthy Oregon. This bill offers a much-needed and long-overdue action plan to make healthcare affordable, effective and accessible to all Oregonians - and now we can move from debating the failures of our health care system to acting on solutions."

Earlier this week, the Governor appointed Barney Speight as Executive Director of the Oregon Health Fund Board. I have worked with Barney for a number of years, and I'm pleased to see that he will be supervising implementation of the Healthy Oregon Act over the next 18 months.

Barney has served as the Deputy Administrator for the Washington State Health Care Authority for the last two years; before that he spent twenty-five years in Oregon in a variety of health-related positions, including Administrator of the Oregon Office of Medical Assistance Programs and Administrator of the Office of Health Plan Policy and Research. In the private sector, Speight worked for Kaiser as the Vice President of the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest and Government Relations Representatives. He also worked for the Regence Group and Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital and Medical Center, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and the Oregon Medical Association. He's enormously qualified.

Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done. Passing the Healthy Oregon Act is like reaching base camp at Mt. Everest--a spectacular accomplishment, but the climb to the

summit still lies ahead.

Please continue to visit the [Hope for a Health Oregon website](#) to stay informed and involved as the process moves forward.

Strong Ethics Package Passes Legislature

New Laws Set Limit for Gifts and Increase Funding for Ethics Commission.

In the final days of the session, the legislature passed Senate Bill 10, a new ethics package which tightens

the rules governing gifts to legislators, strengthens lobbying regulations, and increases the penalty for violations of ethics laws.

Under the new law, no legislator or member of the executive branch may receive gifts from an organization or individual with a value greater than \$50.00, and no legislator may become a lobbyist for one year following their departure from the legislature. Also, the penalty for violating ethics laws was raised from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and funding for the Government Standards and Practices Commission, the state's ethics body, was increased to ensure reporting and compliance with the new laws.



[Read the bill](#)

Funding Increased for Higher Education

Millions added to 2007 budget, boosting competitiveness



Following years of neglect and chronic underfunding of higher education, Oregon's public universities and community colleges got a much needed increase in funding this session, thanks to higher than expected revenues and a growing recognition that Oregon has fallen behind the curve in recent years when it comes to attracting and retaining talented young students.

In the last week of the session, the legislature approved a new capital construction budget totaling \$561 million, with the state-funded portion of the budget increasing from \$115 million to \$233 million. The new budget also directs an additional \$106 million to expanding financial aid for student loans, doubling the current amount.

The extra money from the state will allow Oregon universities to begin tackling the nearly \$640 million backlog in deferred maintenance construction so they can improve their facilities, modernize their labs and classrooms, and begin competing more seriously with other public universities around the country. The increased funding for financial aid will also make Oregon universities more attractive to aspiring college students both in and out of state.

A Brief Word about Cougars

Why I voted for HB 2971

In the past few weeks, many of you have called or written to me regarding HB 2971, which deals with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's cougar management program. Given the sensitive nature of this issue, I would like to take just a moment to explain my vote on this bill.

Please know that HB 2971 does not undermine or change voter-approved Measure 18, which prohibited sport hunters from "using bait to attract or take black bears or using one or more dogs to hunt or pursue black bears or cougars."

As you know, exemptions were allowed within Measure 18 where wildlife posed a public health risk or became a public nuisance. Also exempted under Measure 18 were "employees or agents of county, state or federal agencies while acting in their official capacities."

HB 2971 does not change the nature or scope of Oregon's current wildlife management program. It simply clarifies the authority of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to appoint professional and qualified volunteers to assist untrained ODFW employees as agents in wildlife management. Both the Oregon League of Conservation Voters and the Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society explicitly stated that they were not opposed to HB 2971.

To those of you who contacted me about this bill, thank you for your interest and for your concern for the continued wellbeing of Oregon's wildlife. I hope you will continue to share your thoughts and opinions with me on this issue.

Keeping in Touch During the Interim

How to reach us during the interim and special session



During the interim, I will be working on committees and staying involved with the implementation of the Healthy Oregon Act.

Beginning in February 2008, we will be back in the Capitol for a one-month special session. However, due to a planned renovation of the legislative offices beginning next month, our office location will be in flux.

However, you can continue to contact us during the interim and the special session by email (sen.alanbates@state.or.us) or phone:

Salem Office: (503) 986-1703

We look forward to hearing from you!
