



In the Capitol...

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State Representative Vicki Berger

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KBZY Radio

Every **Wednesday** morning at
8:10am

The “Gang of 8” and the “Fantastic 4” was the topic of discussion. They aren’t super heroes . . . so to speak.

The “Gang of 8” consists of 4 Republican and 4 Democrat members of the House who, appointed by the Speaker, are charged with the task of formulating a bipartisan budget.

The “Fantastic 4” consists of 2 Republican and 2 Democrat members of the Senate who, appointed by the Senate President, are charged with the chore of escorting the Gang of 8’s budget through the Senate.

These work groups are the legislature’s latest effort to compute an acceptable budget to both parties and to both chambers of the legislative assembly.



Q: *Why does Oregon give a tax break to people who have a vacation home?*

A: **We’re not!** In Oregon, a person is allowed to deduct the interest of real estate loans from their state taxes. A loan could be used to pay for any number of holdings including a primary home, investment property or a vacation home. The state has no method of identifying what that loan is being used for.

Q: *Why are we giving a tax break on luxury boats?*

A: The state of Oregon does not have a tax on personal items (i.e. Boats, cars, jewelry, etc.)

Q: *Why can’t we get more money for public education?*

A: Legislators do not have a fundamental disagreement about desiring good schools. We are stuck in a reality that also has to take into account the resource side of the equation. Since the close of the last session in 2001, the state has 20% less revenue. Our “wants” must balance with our resources.

Q: *When is the Legislature going to Sine Die?*

A: As soon as there is a bipartisan agreement on the budget for the next biennium. As of this date (08/08/03), this is the longest session on record. It will be mostly likely be two to three weeks before the session ends.

Berger Supports Trains Protest vote against ODOT budget

The Willamette Valley train whistles were silenced when the budget for the Department of Transportation was passed out of the House on August 5. The budget did not include any state support for the two daily Cascades trains.

Operated by Amtrak, service between Portland and Eugene will expire August 31 without legislative intervention. Amtrak’s Coast Starlight between Seattle and Los Angeles will not be affected.

In her floor speech during the budget’s debate, Rep. Berger praised budget writers for the package but protested the fact that train funding was not a higher priority.

“I am disappointed that trains are not a part of the larger package. The trains are an essential component of Salem’s transportation infrastructure,” said Rep. Berger.

Over the past several weeks, the Representative has received several phone calls, letters and e-mails from constituents regarding this issue.

“Trains offer a good commuting alternative. As we age, we will be struggling to find transportation that gets people where they need to go.”

HB 5067 moves on to the Senate. It is hoped that train service funding will be restored before the budget is finalized.

Public Input Still Needed A Personal Message

I still need your input. I need to know what is important to you. A legislator’s performance is only as sound as their communication with their constituents.

If you are concerned about a particular issue or process, say so! I welcome your feedback.