

House Democratic Office

PRESS RELEASE

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House Dems defeat Republicans' attempt to weaken accountability Republican budget would cut \$1 million from Audit Division

SALEM—Representative Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie) led Democrats' efforts Friday to prevent the Republican majority from reducing the ability of the state Audits Division to identify waste, fraud and abuse in state government, the House Democratic Office announced today. The Democrats' thwarted the House Republicans attempt to pass a budget that cuts \$1 million from the division's budget, along with six positions.

"It has never been more important to strengthen state government's ability to keep itself honest and efficient," Witt said. "It has never been more important to reassure citizens and voters that government takes accountability seriously, and that it's doing everything possible to ensure that the public knows what's going on and how the state is spending taxpayers' money."

Witt charged that the drastic cut to the Secretary of State's Audit Division makes a mockery of that commitment. "This budget weakens the best government auditing system the state of Oregon has ever had," Witt said. "Instead of cutting money from this critical program, we should be bolstering it—simply because honesty and efficiency save taxpayers' money."

The Republicans' proposed cut would eliminate the Audit Division's investigative work, and reduce by half its ability to conduct municipal audits and examinations of cash management in state agencies.

The Republicans want to use the money cut from the Audit Division to fund an auditing under the control of the legislature itself, which Witt said is a "feeble excuse"

"The surest way to inject politics and partisanship into state audits is to bring the function into the legislature," Witt said. "The Secretary of State's Audit Division has proved that it can carry out its heavy responsibility in a fair, nonpartisan way. It has proved that it can do its job economically. And it has gotten dramatic results that have saved taxpayers' money and ensured honest, above-board operations in government."