

Senate Republican Office

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, S-323
Salem, Oregon 97301

May 16, 2011

CONTACT: Michael Gay
(503) 986-1950
(503) 781-8559

Senate Republicans force job creation bill to Senate floor *0.3% more Columbia River water for agriculture = 16,000 jobs*

Salem, OR – Senate Republicans pulled a bill to the Senate floor Monday morning that would allow Oregon farmers to access their share of excess Columbia River water. Republicans forced a vote on Senate Bill 190 after the legislature failed to take action on any job creating legislation for the first 100 days of session. The bill failed on a party line vote.

“Oregonians are expecting a big picture solution to our chronic unemployment and constant revenue shortfalls,” said Senator David Nelson (R-Pendleton). “This bill has a vision for prosperity and opportunity in Oregon. It will put Oregonians back to work and revenue back into state government. Taking this step would not only mean the creation of thousands of family wage jobs, but also equal millions of dollars to pay for additional school teachers and state police officers.”

Senate Bill 190 designates thirty-two million acre feet of excess Columbia River water for use by farmers and ranchers in Eastern Oregon, water that would otherwise flow uselessly to the ocean. Oregon currently utilizes a mere 0.3% of total Columbia River water, while Washington and Idaho each access 4%. Washington has used Columbia River water to irrigate more than 32,000 additional acres, creating a new industry on otherwise unused land. Estimates put potential jobs created from the proposal at more than 16,000.

“This bill could empower an agricultural renaissance in Eastern Oregon, turning dry soil into fertile farmland,” said Senator David Nelson (R-Pendleton). “Our neighbor states to the north are capitalizing on this renewable resource, and Oregon should do the same. ”

For every nine acres brought into production one job is created. An additional 450,000 acre feet of water can bring life to 150,000 acres and create more than 16,000 jobs.

The high value crops that Eastern Oregon could grow with additional water from the Columbia could equal \$755 million of new economic activity every year. A percentage of that would flow into state coffers, equaling hundreds of millions of dollars in resources for underfunded priorities like K-12 education.

###