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New Budget Transparency Website Launches December 30th

(Salem) **An exciting new website will be launched today to give Oregonians more transparency in their state budget.** The site, www.oregon.gov/transparency was created by legislation adopted unanimously by the 2009 Oregon Legislature. The co-chief sponsors on [House Bill 2500](#) include [State Representative Jefferson Smith](#) (D-Portland), [State Representative Arnie Roblan](#) (Coos Bay), [State Representative Kim Thatcher](#) (R-Keizer, Newberg, St. Paul) and [State Representative Gene Whisnant](#) (R-Sunriver).

The [Department of Administrative Services \(DAS\)](#) has been working on the site for the past six months and they were able to develop this new venture using existing resources. "I was very pleased to see the "can-do" approach from DAS, especially during tough budget times," Thatcher noted, "the upcoming tax measures have generated a lot of questions from voters about the state budget and this new site should help them dig down for some answers."

"My hope is that the more transparent we are, the more confidence and trust we build between the people of Oregon and their state government," said Roblan. The web site has several pages to help citizens learn more about state agencies. It also covers "Money coming in – Revenue" and "Money going out – Expenditures".

"I am proud to be part of the legislative team which produced the transparency website for the citizens and taxpayers of Oregon," commented Whisnant. "This bill is an example of successful bipartisan work by legislators and support by DAS which the people expect from Salem. I am optimistic that we will make our website the easiest to use and the most informative of any state transparency website."

Initially the site includes basic information but there are plans to expand and make it more user friendly. A special 9-member Transparency Oregon Advisory Commission was created by the legislation. "I hope the commission will do three things: Help Oregonians understand how the state spends public dollars and what that accomplishes, provide opportunities for constructive citizen input, and encourage greater efficiency in government," said Smith. "I think the members of commission have similar goals, and I'm excited to work together."

"This new website promises to be an excellent tool to allow the public to 'google their government'," added Jon Bartholomew, a member of the new commission and Policy Advocate with the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG). "The site will contribute to a greater understanding by the public of how Oregon government functions, which is good for our democracy. We look forward to working with the state to continually improve the usefulness and comprehensiveness of the site."

Scott Harra, the Director of DAS explained, "this is a solid first step in answering the public's need for information about what state government does and how it invests tax dollars. It's a useful tool created with a minimal investment, as the legislature required. To provide a more elaborate report would require a substantial investment in our information systems, which our present budget cannot accommodate."

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