

Whisnant's Weekly Legislative Update

January 23, 2009

Dear Friends,

We started our short week with an exciting new communication opportunity for me to speak to constituents. KITC 106.5 FM covering South Deschutes County has allowed us to be on the radio every Tuesday at 7:15 AM to discuss what is happening in Salem. I joined Tony DeBone on the La Pine Morning Show with Bob Shotwell and the Radio RoughNecks. We were joined by Art Eucker, La Pine Chamber chair. For those who live in South Deschutes County, please join us. Next week, on the 27th, the guest will be Rob Roy from the Senior Affordable Housing project.

On Thursday morning, I had another opportunity to communicate with Central Oregon officials. The Central Oregon Legislators met with officials from the Central Oregon Cities Organization for our bi-weekly video conference meeting. We discussed the legislative issues important to Central Oregon cities.

The legislative pace is picking up and the House actually passed two bills on Thursday. Also, rumors are starting to leak on the budget bills and information is coming out on the continued decline in state revenues.

Our first 2009 bill HB 2424 received a "first reading" today. HB 2424 adds removal of noxious weeds to the "Adopt-a-Highway" program. Our staff with some help from the bill requester, Brenda Pace, worked hard to get 32 House sponsors and eight Senators. The bill will now be assigned a Committee. We will request the House Agriculture Committee which is chaired by the bill co-chief sponsor, Representative Brian Clem (D Salem). We will keep you posted on our bills and other important legislation.

Sincerely,



Gene Whisnant

COMMITTEES

The House Judiciary Committee met on Tuesday and held public hearings on 3 bills and referred another bill to the Business Committee. On Wednesday, I joined the committee to tour the Oregon Youth Authority Hillcrest facility in Salem. Also, today the 23rd, the Committee went on a tour of the Oregon Youth Facility for Girls at Oak Creek in Albany. These tours are very informational and help the members of the Committees have a better understanding of the operations of the facilities and the challenges which the facility staffs and OYA face. The tours provide the committee members an observation which will help us pass better legislation for the OYA, our juvenile courts, and youth.

The Ways and Means Education subcommittee joined the full Ways and Means members on Tuesday, for an overview on the Governors Recommended Budget for Education.

BILLS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Rep. George Gilman has drafted a bill to remove the ethanol mandate and allow the sale of non-ethanol gas. I have signed on as a sponsor.

The Legislature's economic stimulus plan (SB 338) passed out of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction on January 21 and is scheduled to be approved on Friday by the full Joint Ways and Means committee. We will probably see it in the House next week. I plan to vote no on this bill because I do not see it as an economic stimulus but as an irresponsible act by the Legislative leadership to "max out the state credit card." This bill borrows \$176 million dollars to pay for unfunded and deferred maintenance on state owned facilities. Why did the state agencies not perform this maintenance within their previous budgets? You, the taxpayer, will repay the loan over 15 years. Thus, you will be paying at least twice the loan amount. I do not have the exact amount of interest but look at your how much interest it cost for a 15 year mortgage. I do not understand how state agencies performing maintenance on their facilities will create new jobs and long term economic growth. Also, I am not sure if you call this irresponsible action "earmarks" or "pork;" however, University of Western Oregon where President of the Senate works, will receive \$8 million for a project and Portland Community College where Rep. Larry Galizio works will receive a \$5 million project. The list of projects includes \$100,000 for freeze lights at the state prison and \$50,000 to pull shrubs on state land. Please understand that the freeze lights will cost you \$200,00 and the shrub removal will cost you \$100,000 -- projects will double in cost because we are not paying for these projects; we are putting them on the State Credit card which is about to "max out." Please ask the Governor to stop this irresponsible action by our Legislative leaders.

EVENTS/SPECIAL INTEREST ITEMS

On Wednesday, Roger Olson from the County visited with me as a NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) advocate. I assured Roger that I have been a constituent supporter of the state properly and adequately addressing mental health funding. However, the Governors recommended budget failed in this goal. Thus, the legislature will have to find ways to adequately fund mental health.

On Thursday; Josie, Megan and I attended the County Veteran's Service Officers presentation in the Capitol. We learned about the system and the veteran needs. In the 2005 session, I supported the bill to increase the funding for County Veteran's Service Officers which is essential to supporting our military veterans.

Also, on Thursday, I attended an interesting Cascade Policy presentation on the economic impact of the Governor's Cap and Trade Policy. Please study this issue and give the Governor your input.

OTHER INFORMATION

I am providing you the Governor's address so you may choose to share your opinion on the ethanol mandate repeal bill and his Cap and Trade proposal with his office. The address is Governor Kulongoski

160 State Capitol, 900 Court Street, Salem, Oregon 97301-4047.

The message phone line number is 503.378.4582.

I would like to bring to your attention, that on our official website (www.leg.state.or.us/whisnant) we have added a photos page. As constituents come into the office, or Representative Whisnant attends events and participates in various activities, we will be posting photographs on this page. I encourage you to visit the page and see what has already been posted.

I hope you enjoyed this update today and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact my office. Our address is 900 Court St NE H-471, Salem OR, 97301; phone number is 503-986-1453; and our email address is rep.genewhisnant@state.or.us

One more reminder, you can watch the Legislative meetings on the Oregon Channel, available online at www.oregonchannel.org. Floor session schedules are available at <http://www.leg.state.or.us>.