



Representative Gene Whisnant

R-Sunriver

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Whisnant's Update

February 15, 2010

Dear Friends,

Where is the meat? Remember the Wendy's ad where the lady asked that question? I ask the same question about the February 2010 "emergency session." Where is the meat and substance of the bills that have been introduced?

We have now completed two weeks of a four week session and over 200 bills were introduced. Leadership indicated that the bills should be time sensitive or important, non-controversial bills which help create jobs and improve Oregon's economy. It appears that the House Republican bills which we believe would help create jobs or improve the economy will NOT move out of the house and thus, are dead. Please note that each Representative was allowed to introduce one bill and each Senator; two bills. However, all committees, chaired by Democrats except for the House Water Committee, were not limited in the number of bills they could introduce.

**Honestly and with respect,
Gene Whisnant**

COMMITTEES

Judiciary:

Last week, the committee unanimously passed [HB 3695-2](#) which provided some technical changes to the Metal Theft Bill last session. I put on the record that the intent of this bill is an important public safety issue. However, I am concerned that we not disadvantage our metal recycling programs and businesses with mandates. I supported both [HB 3634](#) (Victim Rights bill) and [HB 3601](#) (Allows implied consent hearings by telephone) which were passed out of committee.

Consumer Protection & Government Accountability:

Last week, we passed unanimously [HB 3659A](#) to protect against health insurance cancellation. We passed unanimously [HB 3610](#) which is a “fix it” bill to SB 628. We passed [HB 3699](#) which related to construction licensing unanimously. Also, [HB 3624](#) relating to appraisal management companies passed 8-1. I voted YES and testified that I do not believe the bill is perfect. I am glad the chair has agreed to continue working on the issue during the interim and restudy where the regulatory authority should be located. The committee chair wanted to move to the House Rules Committee [HB 3615](#), adding business to the Unlawful Trade Practices Act. However, the proposal failed, I voted NO, to achieve a majority vote; and thus, the bill dies. However, House Legislative leadership re-introduced a bill in Rules Committee on Friday that is very similar.

LEGISLATION

Last week on the floor, although I voted NO to override the Governor’s veto on SB 897 (PERS); the House passed the override of the governor’s veto of SB 897 by 44-15. In the 75th Legislative Session, I voted yes on SB 897 which provided some changes which I support. The controversial issue of SB 897 requires PERS to provide verification of member benefits and then guarantees that level of benefits regardless of their accuracy. PERS should not make mistakes but individuals do bear some responsibility and the taxpayers should not be responsible for financial mistakes. I was informed that in the interim other changes may be presented to provide some protection to the retiree and the state.

I also voted NO on [HB 3613A](#) (Off shore drilling) which prohibits any form of leasing for purpose of exploration, development or production of oil, gas, or sulfur in the territorial sea for a period of ten years. In the 2005 Session, I voted yes for the same restrictions for 3 years. However, with our current economic crisis, I support the President and other states that are now considering the possibility of off-shore oil, gas, or sulfur. I believe that any projects which go forth would have had extensive review and evaluation without the Legislature taking this economic opportunity off the table with timber and water and to a degree fishing industries in Oregon.

I voted YES on [HB 3628A](#) which encourages inclusion of Mandarin Chinese for Oregon students. I have advocated for increased opportunity for our students to learn Mandarin Chinese and hope this bill accomplishes the goal.

I voted NO on [HB 3651A](#) (prevailing wage on installation of public solar systems) and NO on [HB 3682A](#) (smokeless Tobacco tax increase). I voted YES on [HB](#)

[3674](#) which was an important bill that allows electricity generated from biomass facilities to comply with Oregon's renewable portfolio standards.

I voted NO on [HB 3653A](#) which was a modification to SB 519 from the last session which is described as an employer gag bill. The vote was 34-26. We also passed [HJR 100](#) expressing appreciation to the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Rep. Mitch Greenlick's HJR 100A referring to the people a vote on a Constitutional obligation of the state to ensure all access to effective, medically appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right failed 30-28. I voted NO for the third session.

HB 3680A (BETC)

I also supported [HB 3680A](#) which creates limits on the amount of credits for Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC) program. The BETC program has received much press due to the tax credit amount. [HB 3680A](#) limits preliminary certification credits DoE may issue with \$300 million for 2009-2011 and \$150 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. It also adds other restrictions and accountability standards. It turns out that the real number of pre-certified credits was \$1.66 billion. The March 2010 Economic Forecast states that the increases in expectations for the amount of income tax credits to be claimed under BETC contributed to the \$182.8 million decrease in revenue from the December 2009 Forecast. The bill will still result in \$53 million increase for 2009-2011 and \$93 million increase for 2011-2013.

OREGON'S KICKER REFORM

The Governor issued a statement that the legislative leadership did not intend to refer kicker reform to the people this year. He expressed his disappointment and criticism of the Democrat legislative leadership with the quote: "The people of Oregon deserve better."

MARCH 2010 ECONOMIC FORECAST

The bad news is that the revenue is down and the worse news is that revenue for the 2011-2013 budget will be down more. The forecast for General Funds and lottery earnings for 2009-2011 are down an additional \$192.3 million. The forecast is now \$346.4 million below the Close of Session forecast and the expected ending balance is now a negative \$115.8 million General Fund and Lottery. The Oregon Rainy Day Fund is projected to have \$134.7 million and the Education Stability Fund was completely withdrawn at the end of 2007-2009 but with no additional withdrawals will total \$183.3 million. The Governor reported that "the shortfall facing the state is manageable." He also stated that Oregon will

be \$2 billion short to fund services at their current level in the 2011-2012 budget biennium. [Click here](#) to review the March 2010 economic forecast.

EVENTS/VISITORS

Ron Paradis, College Relations at Central Oregon Community College
George Endicott, Redmond Mayor and other COCO members
Sharon Miller and Linda Walker from Central Oregon's NeighborImpact

Several Constituents attended the Taxpayers rally at the Capital on Monday, Feb 15. I was able to meet and discuss my support of their rally points.

TOWN HALL SCHEDULE

Date	City	Time	Place
March 2 nd Tuesday	La Pine	4:30- 6:00pm	La Pine Library 16425 1 st St. La Pine, OR
March 3 rd Wednesday	Redmond	4:30- 6:00pm	Redmond Fire Station 341 NW Dogwood Ave Redmond, OR (We will be in the West side room, and ask that you park on the north side of the building off Elm St.)
March 4 th Thursday	Sisters	4:30- 6:00pm	Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire Station 301 South Elm Street Sisters, OR

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[Click Here](#)

In February, you can watch the

to review Legislator Bills and Committee Legislative Concepts	Legislative Floor Sessions and Committee Meetings at the Capitol online at oregonchannel.org
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In honor of President Abraham Lincoln's February 12 birthday; the following statements which are attributed to Mr. Lincoln are offered for your thought.

"You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them; what they could and should do for themselves."