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April 14, 2009

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Legislative Report



League of Women
Voters of Oregon

Needed: \$3 Billion for 2009-11

The Ways and Means Committee is looking under every rock in the state to locate funds to deal with the projected shortfall for the coming biennium. The revenue committees are seeking sources of new money, including the sunseting of tax credits, the allocation of smaller amounts for specific programs, the addition of an 11% bracket in the personal income tax (possibly \$1 billion), and an increase of the corporate minimum tax. [Read about the the drastic measures the Ways and Means Committee is considering to fill some of the funding gap.](#)



Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Make Oregon's Election Campaigns Cleaner



[HB 3009](#), which will be heard Friday, April 17th in the House Rules Committee, includes campaign contribution limits and other provisions that will make Oregon's election campaigns cleaner. The League supports this bill. A constitutional amendment will also need to be referred to the voters to allow HB 3009 to become effective.

With the recent adoption of a contribution limits bill by the legislature in New Mexico, Oregon is one of only four states without some sort of campaign contribution limits. The League believes that our legislators and other office holders are generally honest and hard working. However, they are caught in a bad campaign finance system that demands ever-increasing contributions and expenditures to win elections. This makes them dependent on huge campaign contributions

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from interest groups that mostly want influence and access. If HB 3009 passes out of committee, watch for more that you can do to support its passage.

Norman Turrill, Campaign Finance Chair

[Contact List of State Representatives Eclips from Oregon State Library](#)

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What Water Resources?



Oregon's Water Resources Department (WRD) recently presented their proposed budget ([SB 5551](#)) and possible budget cuts ([Legislative Fiscal Office 30% agency budget cuts](#)) to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources. The [League's recent](#)

[water study report](#) clearly noted how critical it is to have good scientific data in order to determine how to manage our water. With almost one-third of WRD's employees on the possible cut list because of its heavy reliance on the General Fund, the League has been working to support bills that would create or increase fees for users of the department's expertise. (See previous [Legislative Reports](#).) We also provided [testimony on the budget](#), asking that monies first go to water measurement, hydrology information and other data collection.

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

Printer-Friendly Version



Transfer of Development Credits (TDCs)



During the League's monitoring of the Big Look Task Force meetings, one topic seemed to stand out - how to protect our agricultural and forestland base and our special natural areas. A market-based tool used in other states is called Transfer of Development Credits (TDCs), where the development potential of lands would move from one landowner to another. For instance, owners of prime agricultural lands could sell any development rights they might have to someone who could use those credits in an area where development should go. We previously supported this concept in HB 2229 and last week [supported SB 763](#) that sets up a clear process for TDCs to be used in Oregon.

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

The Metolius: Area of Critical State Concern

Last week the House Land Use Committee heard testimony on [HB 3100](#), a bill that would accept the recommendation of the Land Conservation and Development Commission to designate the Metolius Basin an Area of Critical State Concern. The management plan would:

1. Protect the basin from large-scale development, recognize the



- hydrological impacts of development and protect important wildlife resources.
2. Give Jefferson County a clear path to allow small-scale recreation oriented development consistent with the carrying capacity of the area.
3. Provide a fair result for property owners.

After careful consideration of both the public process and the recommendation, LWVOR provided [testimony in support of HB 3100](#).

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

Hearings on Health Care Reform Bills



The Senate Health Care and Veterans Affairs Committee has heard a series of bills ([SB 451](#) through [SB 457](#)) within the past two weeks based on the Oregon Health Fund Board recommendations for health care reform. The goal is to pass these bills out of the committee before the end of April, so all amendments and fiscal impacts must be submitted before then.

[Read the details on each of the Senate health care reform bills.](#)

Meanwhile, the House bill implementing the Oregon Health Authority (HB 2009), continues to be amended and discussed prior to passage out of the House Health Care Committee by the end of April. The League will closely monitor all of these bills as they make their way through the process.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

Road Show Hearings for Ways and Means



The Ways and Means Committee of the Oregon State Legislature will be holding public hearings around the state during the next two weeks, prior to the release of the Co-Chairs' budget on May 17 (which will be posted on the [Office of Economic Analysis](#) website). The LWVOR action committee will be delivering League testimony at some of them. We encourage you to attend the hearings in your areas and observe the process.

[Budget facts, League opinions, and hearing dates and locations.](#)

Paula Krane, Public Access Coordinator

Editor's Note: Learn how the budget process works from a Legislative Fiscal Office presentation of [Oregon's Budget Process](#) (pdf). It summarizes the policy, process, budget cycle, legislative paths (including the role of the Ways and Means Committee) and more.

Oregon's Unemployment Rate Rises

[In a news release from the the Oregon Employment Department](#), the state's unemployment rate jumped from 10.7% in February to 12.1 in March and continues to surpass the national rate.

A recent article in The Oregonian newspaper ("[Oregon unemployment rockets past 12%](#),") reported Oregon's unemployment rate has exceeded Michigan's rate (which has been the highest rate in the nation).



Initiative Reform Being Considered



Hearings have been held in both the Senate and House Rules Committees on proposals for continued revisions to the initiative process, dealing with signature gatherers and their employers, fiscal information in the ballot title, increased penalties for fraud, and possible use of the indirect initiative with the entire Legislature or an interim committee of legislators to review all proposed initiatives. Work is being done "behind the scenes" with interested House and Senate members to consolidate the ideas and bring forth one or two bills.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Specialist

Speaking the Language of the Legislature



Sunset Clause: A statement added to the end of a measure which causes the act to "sunset," or become ineffective, after a certain date.

For more definitions, see the Legislature's [glossary of terms](#).

Mark the Date

April 16 (Thursday) - [Why Repower Oregon](#), Oregon League of Conservation Voters, 6:00 p.m.

May 1 (Friday) - [Global Warming Commission meeting](#), 9 am to 1 pm, Oregon State Library, Rm. 102-103.

Legislature Action Dates

April 17 (Friday) Deadline to schedule work sessions in chamber of origin*

April 28 (Tuesday) Deadline for consideration of changes in chamber of origin*

May 14-16 Joint Committee on Ways and Means: public hearings on policy bills with budgetary impacts

May 15 (Friday) Revenue Forecast due

May 20 (Wednesday) Deadline to schedule work sessions in second chamber*

May 28 (Thursday) Committees close*

June 30 or before (Tuesday) Sine Die

*Except Joint Ways and Means, Senate Finance and Revenue, House Revenue, Senate and House Rules Committees

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