



Legislative Report



League of Women Voters
of Oregon

Crunch Time: Budget vs. Revenue



The Ways and Means Committee has completed its eight area sweep of Oregon. What it heard from several hundred citizens (and an audience of more than two thousand) was the devastation that will result from drastic cuts to education, human services and public safety. Back in Salem, the committee is poised to present a vastly decreased budget in response to what is expected to be a \$3-4 billion shortfall revenue projection on May 15.

In the meantime, the legislative revenue committees in the House and Senate are struggling with how to fill such a huge hole with small shovelfuls of funding from various pots. Possibilities for coming up with large amounts of dollars range from using the Rainy Day funds to raising taxes. [Link here to see the possibilities as well as a list of problems associated with these fund raising methods.](#) For any of these to work, they each need to bring in revenue of hundreds of millions.

The Ways and Means and the Revenue committees need to talk! There is little evidence that a broad discussion of what is needed to fill the hole is meshing with the efforts to cut services and programs. Perhaps this is too harsh an indictment, but because there appear to be many things being decided "behind closed doors" we have to wonder about transparency. The Task Force on Revenue Restructuring addressed this problem of budgeting, but the recommendations apparently have not been heeded.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Cuts in Health Care Programs Would Have Major Impacts



For 15 years Oregon has administered the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) as a Medicaid demonstration project. The OHP uses a list of prioritized medical conditions and treatments and contracts with managed care organizations in each county or region. However, Medicaid rates for payments are below 80% and often below cost. **The result has been that patients have limited access to services due to the low payment rate.** Health Care Reform efforts were supposed to expand the number of children and adults covered, but the budget deficits have instead led to cuts in the number served.

Tens of thousands of Oregonians would be impacted if proposed cuts to health

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care programs in the coming biennium are enacted. [Link here to read about the Division of Medical Assistance Programs' budget cuts at the 30% level, some of which have already been enacted in January of 2009.](#)

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

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Should I Vote Early?



With the May election rapidly approaching, we wanted to let you know that the League traditionally recommends that you wait until the latest possible time to return your ballot. It is often the case that last minute information comes out the final weekend, and if you mail your ballot early, you can't change your vote. This year you need to mail by Friday, May 15, or drop off at any of the [drop sites](#) in your area before 8 PM on Tuesday the 19th.

The US Postal Service will raise the price of 1st class stamps on Monday, May 11th. If you mail your ballots after May 10th, make sure you have the correct postage: 44 cents. Secretary of State Kate Brown, in an [op ed piece for the Oregonian](#), explains the situation in detail.



Paula Krane, Public Access Coordinator

Health Care Reform Bills Clear First Hurdle



A number of health care reform bills have been heard and passed out of committee, many with several amendments and revisions, most notably [HB 2009 B](#), the health care omnibus bill, which establishes an Oregon Health authority, and the first hurdle in the path to health care reform in Oregon. [HB 2116 A](#) establishes Health Care for All Oregon Children. Numerous other bills would establish an Oregon Health Authority, retain the Medical Assistance Program, and more. [Link here for more](#)

[details.](#)

The health care reform bills with a fiscal impact have been sent to the Ways and Means Committee. The estimated fiscal impact of HB 2009B is \$11 million. The senators and representatives on the Ways and Means Committees will be making the final recommendations based on available funds. ([Read about](#) cuts of 30% for the Division of Medical Assistance Programs). A two year implementation process may be efficient while the economy recovers. Many of the cost savings measures can be started while the implementation is planned.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

Light the Path for Energy Efficiency and More

A multitude of energy bills before the Legislature would promote energy efficiency, address carbon emissions, capture federal funds for bike and walking trail improvements, and more. [Read a partial list of bills being considered.](#)



Enter the Matrix



Track the bills, read the testimony . . . enter the [Action Matrix!](#)

Speaking the Language of the Legislature



Engrossed Bill: A measure that is printed with its amendments included. Such a bill will have "A (or B or C, etc.) Engrossed" printed at the top, which is a signal to legislators before a vote that the bill before them has changed from its original version.

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

Mark the Date

May 15 (Friday) Last Day to mail in ballot.

May 19 (Tuesday) Last day to drop off ballot at specified location (read "[Should I Vote Early?](#)")

Legislature Action Days

May 4-16 Joint Committee on Ways and Means: public hearings on policy bills with budgetary impacts

May 15 (Wednesday) [Revenue Forecast](#) released

May 17 (Friday) [Ways and Means Co-chairs' budgets](#) released

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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