

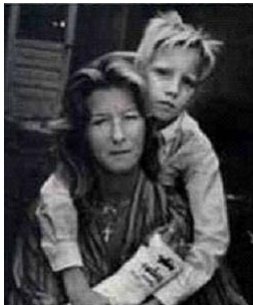


Legislative Report



League of Women Voters
of Oregon

Ending Homelessness



Homeless in America, photograph by Tipper Gore. (Image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) does a yearly homeless shelter count on a single day early in the year. In January 2008 there were 12,529 homeless people in Oregon living in cars, camps, shelters or with other families. At that time, 3,084 people were in emergency shelters, 4,052 were in transitional housing and 5,393 were on the streets or not served. The staff reports that the numbers have increased 35% so far this year. The majority of homeless are single adults or young families with children. Only 263 were unaccompanied youth ([see related story, Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)).

The goal of the OHCS programs is permanent, supportive housing for the long term. [SB 200](#), if passed, establishes state policy on homelessness. This bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) and OHCS to collaborate on housing programs. Currently the OHCS funds 17 regional community action agencies for rental assistance, transition housing and shelters as well as food banks, energy assistance and weatherization programs.

The OHCS budget ([HB 5019](#)) for 2009-11 will phase out home buyer assistance programs but continue homeless programs, shelters, case management, and rental assistance. The document recording fee ([see the 5-Minute Activist on Affordable Housing in LR #8](#)), which passed earlier this session, will provide backfill for the loss of General Funds.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

Note: See "Mark the Date" for information on the Oregon's Alliance of Children's Program's "[Runaway and Homeless Youth Day](#)" at the Capitol.

May 15: Day of Reckoning

Will the deficit for the 2009-11 budget be \$3.5 billion, \$5 billion or even as Senate President Courtney fears, \$7 billion? The May economic forecast, upon which the biennial budget revenue forecast will be made, has been hanging like a black cloud over the Capitol since before the session began. [Read more about proposals and strategies.](#)



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Quick Links

5-Minute Activist



Seventy-eight percent of workers eligible for leave under family or medical leave laws report that they do not do so because they cannot afford the loss of income. [SB 966](#) would help alleviate the problem by creating a worker-funded program that would cost only 2 cents per hour per worker.

The bill has now been passed to the Ways and Means Committee. Your help is needed to make sure that the bill moves forward.

Please contact your senator. [Click here for the message to send to](#)

[your senator.](#)

Want to know more?

- Visit [Time to Care for Oregon Families](#) website. The League is a member of this coalition.
- [Read League testimony.](#)
- Read the Register-Guard editorial: "[Give Paid Leave a Try.](#)"

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Bottle Bill Spinning



After a lot of hard work by the interim Bottle Bill Task Force, an expanded bottle bill was proposed to the Legislature in the form of HB 2184. After hearings and a series of votes, [HB 2184B](#) now sits in House Revenue. In the meantime, HB 3465 proposes to return to the state the sizable pot of funds (an estimated \$20-\$30 million) accumulated from containers that consumers have paid a deposit on

but haven't returned for refund. This bill is also in House Revenue. [Read the article in the Statesman Journal for more details on this bill.](#)

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator.

Prescription Drug Program Helps Uninsured



The Prescription Drug Repository Program has been proposed as a way to donate unused sealed prescription drugs to people in need, such as the uninsured. [HB 2535](#) would create this program under the State Board of Pharmacy by January 2010. Advocates have been enthusiastic, since it would reduce waste and would provide medications to those who can not afford them. It's a win-win program. The bill passed the Senate Human Services Committee Monday, and it is on its way to the Senate floor.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

The Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF) received \$1 million last session for runaway and homeless youth projects. OCCF retained \$100,000 for administration and a little less than \$900,000 was allocated to eight projects throughout the state. The OCCF has had to submit priority cuts up to 30% of its



budget, and the most recent initiatives for Runaway and Homeless Youth and Community Schools are among the cuts. The local county agencies have found the runaway and homeless grants to be helpful in serving that population and would like to retain these programs, as well as others. The possibility of block grants to counties has been suggested. The Human Services Ways and Means subcommittee will be making the reduction recommendations.



The shelter and outreach programs for runaway and homeless youth also receive federal pass-through funds from Oregon Housing and Community Services and the regional community action agencies. One of the funds pays reimbursements to shelters based on the number of residents and the number of nights stayed. These shelter programs are also eligible for federal block grant funds that go to cities and counties.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

2009 Water Investment Package - Huh?



One of the many bills passing committee at the last minute on April 28th was [HB 3369A](#), called the 2009 Water Investment Package. Representatives Bob Jenson and Jefferson Smith had worked with others behind the scenes, originally to address the needs of the Umatilla basin, but they ended up expanding that effort. The bill is now sitting in Ways and Means. [Read more about the different proposals embedded in HB 3369A.](#)

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator.

Making Oregon Efficient and Energy Independent

Many bills that take steps to combat global warming are in various stages in the legislative process. [HB 2186A](#), which lowers greenhouse gas emissions from trucks and commercial vehicles to improve air quality, achieve efficiency and energy independence, passed on the floor of the House last Friday ([link to the Healthy Climate Partnership for the AP article](#)). This week [HB 2626A](#) moved from Revenue to Ways and Means to make loans available to consumers for small scale energy projects. [SB 201A](#) was heard in the Senate subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development to provide low income housing residents with energy efficiency options. [Read details on these and other energy bills.](#)

Elizabeth Rathbun, Action Committee Member

Elections Are A-Changin', but No Holiday

Establishing Election Day as an Oregon holiday got short shrift at the House Rules hearing May 6. Nice idea, but way too costly. The committee finally has been moving election bills, so we will be following them soon in Senate Rules. These include:

- [HB 2511](#) - Allows electronic ballots for long-time absentee voters with a return by fax with a signature.
- [SB 330A](#) - Requires an explanation of the election fraud complaint process to be included in the Voters' Pamphlet.
- [SB 775](#) - All elections except May and November must have the caption stating a requirement of 50% voter turnout to pass. This has already passed the Senate.



- [HB 2667](#) - Requires the Secretary of State to verify the residence of each candidate for state office.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Initiative Reform: Settling for Something Less



here were high expectations that serious problems with the initiative process would be dealt with this session, following the strong recommendations from the interim Task Force on Revenue Restructuring. Although not enough legislators are supporting several bills ([read more](#)), HB 2005 and HB 2041 are moving forward.

[HB 2005](#) is Secretary of State Kate Brown's omnibus initiative reform bill, and is moving after being amended extensively and then passing in House Rules last week. For the most part, it clarifies the changes implemented on January 1, 2008, and tightens up the process to eliminate fraud. Penalties have been increased, with the highest now put at \$10,000 (from \$5000). Volunteer petition passers are not affected by the new law.

[HB 2941](#) would require the Attorney General to give the same ballot title when there is more than one initiative with "substantially identical" content.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Ethics End-Run

The ethics overhaul in 2007, coupled with the clarification and tightening in [SB 30](#) (which has been enrolled and signed by the Governor) this session, has made great strides in improving the public perception of public official's actions, which was at a low ebb in 2006. Now comes [SB 803](#), which would allow legislators to use campaign funds to cover expenses for staff members. The League opposes this proposal as it would start down the slippery slope of broadening how contributions could be used. While we can understand the need for legislators to have additional funding for staff positions and duties, getting the dollars from contributors is the wrong way to go.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Enter the Matrix



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

A blue oval with a yellow swoosh underneath it, containing the text "Mark the Date" in white.

Mark the Date

Don't forget to vote!

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

May 19 (Tuesday) Last day to drop off ballot at a [drop-site location](#).

Legislature Action Days

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

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

May 18 (Monday)(approximately) [Ways and Means Co-chairs' budgets](#) released

May 19 (Tuesday) "Runaway and Homeless Youth Day," 9:30 am to 11:00 am, Room 350 at the Capitol.

For more information contact Martin Rafferty at 541-606-1514 or Jennifer Chamberlin 503-399-9076 with any questions.

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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