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## Legislative Report



League of Women Voters  
of Oregon

### When Is Enough "Enough"?



The Joint Ways and Means Committee has set a goal of \$800 million to be raised by additional taxes to help balance the 2009-11 General Fund budget. The House Revenue Committee is charged with proposing those taxes and appears dedicated to that total. Is \$800 million sufficient, adequate, or essential enough to provide a large enough portion of necessary state services? The minority members of the Legislature have issued an emphatic "Too Much - No New Taxes, Period!"

The debate centers on the premise that the proposed majority budget should reach the \$17 billion needed to continue state programs and services at the current biennial level. Minority members believe that there is sufficient funding, using all of the reserves - about \$650 million (left after balancing the current budget to June 30) and the remaining federal stimulus funds. They would protect K-12 programs and then cut the rest of state services to balance a much lower budget. However, with the 3/5 majority needed in both houses to pass any revenue bills, the majority party has enough votes to pass the proposed taxes and other revenue proposals.

The line has been drawn in the sand. What will happen if the Legislature passes new taxes? What do those tax proposals currently look like? [Read on to find out.](#)

*Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator*

### Energy Bills Need More Energy

In the last days for policy committees to meet, activity on some of the energy bills slowed when the final day for policy committee action arrived. Two bills the League has followed were passed to the floor this week, [HB 2626B](#) and [SB 38](#). [HB 2186A](#) was moved to Senate Rules "for more work." A public hearing resumed in the Ways and Means Natural Resources subcommittee on May 27 with [SB 80A](#), a bill to limit greenhouse gases with a sector by sector approach in a stepwise reduction over several years. [Link here for more details on each bill.](#)



*Elizabeth Rathbun, Energy Specialist*

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## Health Care Reform Soars



[HB 2009B](#) passed out of the Human Services Ways and Means subcommittee on June 1 after two earlier days of hearings and the last B86 amendment. The Omnibus Bill had 589 pages along with another 69 for the amendment. The amendments took out duplications and added public transparency for insurance company rate reviews. The Co-Chairs of the Oregon Health Fund Board testified on May 28 and the Director of the Department of Human Services and the head of Oregon Health

Policy and Research explained the provisions for health care reform. Senator Bates encouraged the passage of the Omnibus Bill, which he conceded was not perfect. Bates commended Representative Greenlick for his work on the bill, and Greenlick named Bates as the father of the bill. The official vote was taken after comments by committee members and the bill passed with one No from Representative Christensen. The bill will go to the full Ways and Means Committee.

The League submitted [a letter in support of HB 2009A](#) during the Health Care Committee process. The League also submitted [a letter in support of HB 2116A](#) when it was in the Revenue Committee process.

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*Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator*



## DLCD Budget Moves to Full Ways and Means



With a 12.5% cut from the 2007-09 budget, the Department of Land Conservation and Development's (DLCD) budget has moved to the Full Ways and Means Committee. This cut means a loss of about 11 staff positions. A budget note was added that requires DLCD to report to the Legislature by March 1, 2010, on the Land Conservation and Development's Policy Agenda. LCDC sets its work plans, including work on rulemaking, after each legislative session. With the number of policy bills still being considered, such as identifying the Metolius Basin as an Area of Critical State Concern, changes to

Goal 8 (Destination Resorts), creation of a new Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program, and pilot projects for specific TDC developments, the Legislature appears to be following LCDC's work more closely.

*Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources*

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## Governance Updates



[Link here for updates on the Voters' Pamphlet and other election and campaign finance reform issues.](#)

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## Provider Taxes to Support Expanded Health Care



Proponents and opponents had the opportunity to testify on the provider taxes to fund the Oregon Health Plan expansion at the House Revenue hearing on May 28. The negotiations on HB 2116B had kept the bill off the calendar and this was the first hearing in House Revenue. The large hospitals have agreed to a 3% assessment in order to claim the federal Medicaid match to pay for the care of uninsured adults. The Department of Human Services (DHS) reported an expected expansion from 25,000 to 50,000 adults. The private insurance

companies, managed care organizations and Public Employees Benefit Board will pay 1% assessments on premiums in order to pay for children's health care. DHS expects this match for federal funds will cover 80,000 children. Providence, Regency and Kaiser, the large insurance companies, were in agreement. However, there were objections from Association of Oregon Industries for some insurance companies and small businesses. A committee member noted that there are currently 600,000 uninsured so this will not meet the need, but it is a start.

The Full Ways and Means Committee recommendation on Monday was a do pass with amendments and for a printed C-Engrossed ([click here to read HB 2116C](#)).

The entire Health Care Reform plan was based on new revenue to pay for this expansion. It was remarkable in the expansion of provider taxes to pay for health care expansion (that's the big deal), especially the insurance company assessment to pay for children. The children's program will be called Health Care for All Children, but only those below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level will be funded through OHP; children within the 200% to 300% of the poverty level will be funded through subsidies in the Office of Private Health Partnerships.

[For more on this bill, link here.](#)

*Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator*

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## Measure 49 "Fixed"

[HB 3225A](#) has moved to Full Ways and Means with minor technical amendments. The measure provides for about 400 Measure 49 (M49) claims to proceed for consideration that would otherwise be precluded, due mainly to minor procedural issues. These claimants will pay a \$175 processing fee to help cover the cost of processing. DLCD is also required to complete M49 processing by June 2010, putting a few "hardship" cases to the head of the line. In cases where claims were filed only at the county or only at the state, DLCD is directed to work with counties to determine if additional claims should be considered. Such determination will require new legislation.

*Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator*

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## Speaking the Language of the Legislature



**Referendum:** The submission of a measure passed by the Legislature to a vote of the people. In Oregon, either the Legislature or citizens, by petition, may cause a measure passed by the Legislature to be placed on the ballot for a vote. In the case of

 a legislative referral, both houses of the Legislature must vote to refer the measure. Such referrals cannot be vetoed by the governor. In the case of a citizen referendum, supporters of the referendum must obtain a specified number of signatures from registered voters. The number of signatures required is determined by a fixed percentage of the votes cast for all candidates for governor at the general election preceding the filing of the petition. Referendum petitions require four percent, currently 44,524 signatures. Any change to the Oregon Constitution passed by the legislature requires referral to voters.

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

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## Enter the Matrix

Want to read the League's testimonies? Track the bills as sine die approaches? Link to audio testimonies? Enter the [Action Matrix](#)!



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## Mark the Date

### *Legislature Action Days*

**June 2 - end of session (Mondays-Fridays):** Although policy committees (except for Rules, Revenue and Ways and Means committees) are not working bills, some are holding "informational meetings." Listen to discussions on issues through the [Legislature's audio website](#) that may be a part of next session's agenda.

**June 30 or before (Tuesday) Sine Die**

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League of Women Voters of Oregon | 1330 12th St. SE, Suite 200 | Salem | OR | 97302