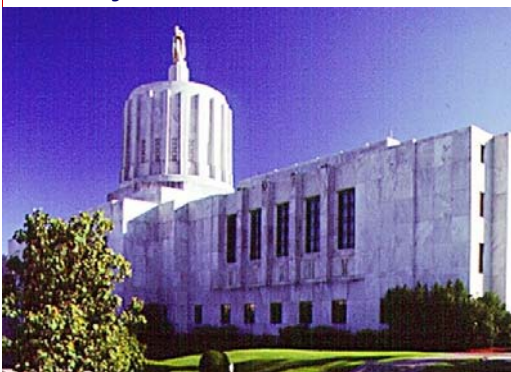


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February 17, 2009

Vol 19, Issue 6



## Legislative Report



League of Women Voters  
of Oregon

### Painful Cuts for the Commission on Children and Families

[The Commission on Children and Families \(OCCF\)](#) is facing cuts in programs due to the financial crisis. Human Services is expected to account for 29% of the State General and Lottery Funds, with 97% of that amount budgeted for the [Department of Human Services \(DHS\)](#), 2% for OCCF, and 1% for other funds.

In our view OCCF saves money both in the short term and long term with such programs as Healthy Start for children, Juvenile Crime Prevention programs, the Oregon Youth Authority and other programs. Public input for the OCCF is scheduled to be heard by the Ways and Means committee February 18. The League supports flexibility in funding programs at the local level. [Learn more about OCCF programs](#) and how these programs save Oregon money.

*Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator*



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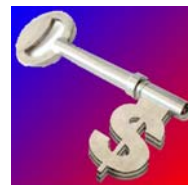
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### A Fiscal Dilemma

Legislators are faced with a Shakespearean dilemma - to use or not to use the reserve funds, which amount to about \$900 million in the Rainy Day and Educational Stability Funds.

For the remainder of the 2007-09 budget period, there is nearly a \$600 million deficit, and agencies are asked to cut 20% in the next four months. However, a \$2 billion (with a B) shortfall exists for 2009-11. The Ways and Means committee is now considering what the final budgets for social services, education, and public safety will look like, after receiving public input in hearings last week.



Meanwhile there are now two stimulus packages - \$176 million for projects in Oregon through Oregon bond sales and Oregon's share of the \$787 billion federal package. We will hear the March revenue forecast on February 20. Stay tuned for a discussion of proposals for assisting local governments in the next *Legislative Report*.

*Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator*



### Quick Links

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## The 5-Minute Activist: HB 2436 Passes the House

[HB 2436](#) will now move to the Senate. The bill establishes a modest fee to be collected by counties for recording documents in deed and mortgage records and to transfer the funds to the [Housing and Community Services](#) department for affordable housing programs. More information can be found at [The Housing Alliance](#) web site.

We need your support to keep this bill moving! Email or write a letter to your [senator](#) and urge them to support this bill.



[State Representatives Eclips from Oregon State Library](#)

[About the Legislature's Web Site Communicating with Your Legislator](#)

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## Human Services Budget Hearings

Hearings are being conducted on [SB 5529](#) which relates to the financial administration of the Department of Human Services. This week, the Ways and Means subcommittee on Human Services is holding public hearings on the DHS Children, Adults and Families Division (CAF). Check the [Ways and Means subcommittee on Human Services](#) agenda for hearing updates.



## Corporate Minimum Tax

Last Friday's hearing on Corporate Minimum Tax ([HB 2070](#)) brought up a number of interesting questions: Does the tax code change a business's behavior? Does the system create incentives? How easy is the tax code to administer and how stable is it? [Link here for the full report.](#)

*Alice Bartelt, Governance Specialist*

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## League Supports Online Voter Registration

Providing an online method for registering voters and updating registrations will make the process easier. Signature verification would be accomplished by accessing Department of Motor Vehicle records. Although the fiscal impact of the bill is about \$220,000, funding would be provided by the [Help America Voter Act \(HAVA\)](#). While we support the bill, [HB 2386](#), the League will monitor the proposal to ensure that the privacy and protection of voters' personal information is protected.



*Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator*

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## Water Bills Flowing

A number of bills related to Oregon's water have been heard the past two weeks.

- [SB 193](#), related to a statewide water strategy ([League testimony](#))
- [SB 194](#), related to water measurement ([League testimony](#))
- [HB 2406](#), related to water appropriation from the Columbia River ([League Testimony](#))



[Part One of our Water Study](#) is now available and will be shared with legislators.

We have also answered an online survey by the [Water Resources Department](#) related to **development of a water strategy**. Of note is the new federal stimulus package which will provide money for water infrastructure. We hope Oregon can take advantage of that money to help with the billions of dollars of backlog throughout Oregon. Our thanks to the many League members who are following water issues this session.

*Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator*

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## Concerns Emerge in Health Care Bill

Hearings on the huge, comprehensive Health Care bill, **HB 2009**, continue in the **House Committee on Health Care**. Of the three parts comprising the framework for the health care system - the **Oregon Health Authority Board**, the **Oregon Health Authority** and the **Oregon Health Insurance Exchange** - the last two have attracted considerable testimony. Comments include:

- The need to remedy the fragmentation of the health care system, its numerous parts and its lack of integration.
- Concern for one entity being in charge of all programs related to health care. One entity acting as both administrator and regulator.
- The role of the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange as a facilitator for the purchase of insurance as well as the role of insurance agents.
- The need for coverage for all children and concern for the uninsured and the underinsured.
- The affordability of insurance for low income people.
- The need for outreach that provides easily accessible information, easily accessible applications and help with completing applications.

An omnibus bill such as HB 2009 will face countless amendments and undergo many changes before it comes to a committee vote. It is clear that such major changes will not be instituted all at once. It should also be noted that HB 2009 has other legislative competition, so many changes are imminent.

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## Speaking the Language of the Legislature

**Relating-to Clause:** The clause found just underneath the title of a bill identifying its subject matter. In Oregon, a bill may only address one subject, and for this reason the relating-to clause becomes an important element of the bill. Relating-to clauses may be broad or narrow.



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

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