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Legislative Report



League of Women Voters
of Oregon

The Federal Stimulus Package: What's in it for Oregon?



The Federal Stimulus package, titled the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#), promises to allocate \$787 billion to states through tax cuts and spending. But what's in it for Oregon?

According to the *Oregonian*, our state will receive \$2.2 billion spread over two to three years for state government, education, Medicaid, energy, transportation, weatherization and water systems. Tax cuts, extended unemployment benefits, higher food stamp payments and other indirect payments will add another \$3.8 billion.

\$800 million of the \$2.2 billion is available as State Fiscal Stabilization money to help with the state's budget deficit, which includes \$570 million for direct budget aid and \$230 million for higher Medicaid reimbursements. Although the full \$230 million will be spent this fiscal year on Medicaid, legislative leaders have decided to use only \$170 million of the direct budget aid money now, anticipating a continuation of the recession. [Find out more . . .](#)

Jonathan Goldberg, Legislative Intern
Marge Easley, LWVOR President

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Corporate Minimum Tax Likely to Change



Does Oregon's \$10 corporate minimum tax, unchanged since 1931, really attract corporations to our state? In fact, the single most important factor in a decision to locate in a particular state is the education level of the population, according to a panel of experts addressing the House Revenue Committee on February

24. A state's tax policy generally has very little to do with where a business decides to locate.

Although the committee made no decision about a different form of corporate taxation, it is likely that changes will occur before the legislative session ends. During the hearing the next day, February 25, business witnesses agreed that the \$10 corporate minimum is too low. The issue is what will replace it?

We are encouraged that the committee is looking at ways to raise revenue. Two



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options, [HB 2119](#) and [HB 2070](#), are being considered. The League considers HB 2070 to be a more equitable choice, since the tax rate would be based on business activity rather than on gross sales. [Read more about HB 2119, HB 2070, and expert comments.](#)

Alice Bartelt, Governance Specialist

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

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5-Minute Activist: Citizen's Initiative Review Legislation

Legislation is being introduced that would create a pilot citizen-based review process for 1-3 measures on the 2010 ballot. Please take 5 minutes to watch the video that is on the [Health Democracy Oregon](#) website. It provides details about the citizen's review process and highlights the 2008 demonstration in which the League took part.



Printer-Friendly Version



Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Increase



On March 9, the House Revenue Committee will hear testimony on [HB 2768](#), which calls for an increase from 6% to 18% of the income tax credit allowable by the federal government. This bill is the result of a yearlong campaign on the part of "[Oregonians for Working Families.](#)" The League strongly supports this effort, based on our positions for social equity, including basic services, opportunities for achievement and economic security. Here are some reasons the League will be supporting HB 2768:

- The program helps lift families from poverty, and the money goes directly into local economies, an effective anti-poverty strategy.
- Under Oregon's current tax system, a minimum wage worker who works full time, year-round, with one child, pays \$321 in state income taxes, or a month's worth of food.
- The increase would economically benefit more than 220,000 Oregon households - roughly one in seven.
- EITC expansion would redirect dollars to communities with concentrations of low-income working families.
- In this struggling economy, the importance of social equity should be a priority as lawmakers seek ways to assist citizens.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Campaign Finance Reform Dilemma



In 2006, voters sent mixed messages about campaign finance reform. They passed an initiative ([Ballot Measure 47](#)) that provided statutory campaign finance limits and other restrictions, but turned down its sister initiative ([Ballot Measure 46](#)) that amended the Constitution to enable M47 to take effect. But M46 would also have required 3/4 votes in the Legislature or an initiative petition to change any campaign finance law. (The Constitution currently does not allow such CFR limits, and M47 itself stated that it would not go into effect unless a constitutional amendment also passed.) As a result, the Attorney General and Secretary of State have blocked implementation of M47.

Now the sponsors of M46 and M47 are circulating a new constitutional amendment initiative that would allow M47 to go into effect, but it would also prohibit any role in campaign finance by the Legislature. Also, Senator Bill Morrisette has proposed a constitutional amendment, [SJR 6](#), which would allow M47 to go into effect, but without any restrictions on the Legislature. The League neither supported nor opposed M47 when it was on the ballot. We have previously supported the Morrisette approach and generally strongly support campaign finance reform. However, the League cannot support either attempt to implement M47 at this time, because we neither supported nor opposed the content of M47.

The League has sponsored a series of meetings with various groups to determine the next move.

Another bill is being introduced in the Legislature as an alternative to M47 along with a simple constitutional amendment. The Action committee will be discussing this proposal and will provide more information in the near future.

*Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator
Norman Turrill, Campaign Finance Reform Chair*

Help America Vote Act Update

Gracia Hillman, a member of the federal [Elections Assistance Commission](#) and a former Executive Director of [LWVUS](#), reviewed the Oregon implementation of the [Help America Vote Act \(HAVA\)](#) and the overall status of U.S. elections at a hearing before the Oregon Legislature's House Rules Committee on February 18. As a result of HAVA funds and the state HAVA Plan, the following improvements have been implemented:



- A Centralized Voter Registration System
- Access to voting by disabled persons
- Wider efforts for voter education for the disabled and minorities
- [ORESTAR](#) system to follow campaign spending
- County facility access
- Changes to voter registration cards and procedures
- Optical scanning to tally ballots in all counties

Enacted by Congress in 2002, the law is intended to give citizens greater access to the elections process and prevent election fraud. Oregon's vote by mail system, championed by the LWV of Oregon, was complimented by Hillman as improving access and voter participation.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Affordable Housing Bill 2436 Passes Senate

The passage by the Senate of [HB 2436](#) was announced in a [press release](#) on February 25. Championed by several groups, including the League of Women Voters of Oregon, the bill will now go to the Governor for signing. It is hailed as an important step in the struggle to create long-term help for Oregon's low income, senior, and disabled residents.



Health Care Road Show Hearing in Grants Pass



On February 23, the House Committee on Health Care conducted a hearing on HB 2009 in Grants Pass to a "standing room only" group of Southern Oregon residents. Read what Judith Benjamin, President of the League of Women Voters of Ashland, reported in [The ADVOCATE](#), the local League's newsletter.

"Day at the Legislature" is March 17

Have your registered?

Join us for a day at the Capitol and experience the Legislature in action.

A full [agenda](#) of activities has been scheduled.

[Register now!](#) Space is limited and registration closes March 9.

(Sponsored by the [LWVOR](#) and the [American Association of University Women of Oregon](#))



Mark the Date

March 13 (Friday) *Housing Alliance Lobby Day*, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. RSVP to Beth, intern@tnpf.org

March 17 (Tuesday) *Day at the Legislature*, LWVOR and AAUW of Oregon

April 8 (Wednesday) *Health Action Day*, Oregon Health Action Campaign

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

May 28 (Thursday) Committee close*

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

March is Women's History Month - Find out more at the [National Women's History Museum](#)

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