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Legislative Report



League of Women Voters
of Oregon

Rebalance Bills Bring Temporary Reprieve



On March 5, after considerable behind the scenes scrambling, the Oregon House passed two bills on a bipartisan vote that rebalanced the 2007-2009 budget. To accomplish this feat, the Ways and Means Co-Chairs, Sen. Margaret Carter and Rep. Peter Buckley, used Federal Stimulus Funds, Other Funds, Lottery Funds, and the Emergency Board Reserve, and also raided fund balances. Some specific impacts of the rebalance are detailed below.

What's in the 2007-09 Budget Rebalance Package?

[SB 581](#), which will be on the Governor's desk this week, rebalances the 2007-09 budget which is in arrears of more than \$855 million because of the economic recession. **Since Oregon by law cannot have a deficit**, legislators have used a variety of sources to make up the funding shortfall. The Senate passed the bill March 3, 21-8 with 1 excused. The House followed suit on March 5 with a vote of 37 to 22, with 1 excused. In both houses, the vote followed party lines.

Read more about the details of the [budget rebalance for 2007-09](#).

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Budget Rebalance Impacts Human Services and Public Safety

Human Services agencies were spared major cuts due to fund shifts. **Health programs, mental health, and substance abuse programs** did not get any further cuts.

However, cuts were taken in:

- Day care and foster care payments
- Senior field services and developmental disabilities day programs.
- Commission on Children and Families took an expected \$3 million reduction.

The Department of Human Services remains out of balance by \$6.3 million and may need additional funds before the end of the biennium due to increased

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caseloads for food stamps and assistance to families.

Cuts to Public Safety included community corrections funds, Oregon State Police troopers, child support enforcement, organized crime and meth programs, and Judicial Department closures. Read more details on how the [Budget Rebalance Impacts Public Safety](#).

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

Impact of Rebalance on Natural Resources

Natural Resource agencies took a \$12.1 million hit during the 2007-09 budget rebalance. (It's important to remember that natural resource agencies comprise only about 3% of the Total Funds and only 2% of the General Fund/Lottery Funds.) **This was a greater amount than if there had been an across-the-board reduction of all budgets.** Some agencies collect fees for specific programs. Many of those fee accounts were also used to balance the budget. There is concern that any new fee increases will be harder to obtain for needed programs since the accounts can, in hard times, be used for the general good.

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator



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If you want to better understand Oregon's revenue problems and unusual tax structure, please take a look at "[Funding Oregon](#)," a 2004 LWVOR study.

Printer-Friendly Version



Punting the Kicker Out of Bounds



Because of the League's strong positions of support for an adequate and fair tax system, as well as sufficient funding for state and local services, we expect to support current bipartisan efforts to both fill the reserve fund to protect Oregonians during economic hard times and to respect the people's desire for rebates when appropriate.

The proposal currently under discussion would keep the kicker, but rebates would not be given unless the income projections for the biennium exceed the historical percentages, which are considerably greater than 2%. The excess would be put in the Rainy Day Fund until it reached its statutory limit of 10% of the General Fund.

We will follow the discussion carefully.

Read a [short history on Oregon's kicker](#).

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Expanding the Bottle Bill and more

Natural Resource issues are being heard in many committees this session. Below are a few of the issues the League is weighing in on:

- Expanding the Bottle Bill, setting recycling targets ([HB 2184](#)) (League [testimony](#)).
 - **Successful bottle bill legislation** includes the League supported law that went into effect on **January 1** requiring stores to take all containers with a deposit, not just the ones that they sell.
- Expanding UGBs for affordable housing ([HB 2225](#)) (League [testimony](#))
- Stopping Columbia River water appropriation ([HB 2406](#)) (League [testimony](#))
- Coordinating statewide agencies ([HB 2230](#)) (oral testimony supporting DLCD request and opposing County Planners amendment)



[Read more](#) on natural resource issues, including Big Look, Measure 49, and more.

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

Track bills with the League by entering the [LWVOR Action Matrix](#). A source for bill summaries, League positions and testimonies.



Health Care Bills Proliferate

While hearings on [HB 2009](#), the omnibus health bill, continue in the House, the Senate has begun hearings on its own series of health care bills, which deal with topics from the [Oregon Health Fund Board Report](#):

- [SB 452](#) - Establishes Information Technology Oversight Council
Goal: To provide support for speedier application of information technology via a statewide system for electronic health information.
- [SB 453](#) - Eliminates sunset of the Oregon Health Fund Board
Goal: To continue the board that developed the Oregon Health Fund Board Report and allow the Office of Oregon Health Policy and Research to require reporting of health related information from insurers, third party administrators and other entities.
- [SB 454](#) - Establishes data reporting requirements for carriers offering health benefit plans and third party administrators
Goal: To control costs and create transparency by gathering and comparing specific health insurers' financial data.
- [SB 456](#) - Establishes Oregon Integrated Health Home Program (Located in the Office of Health Policy and Research)
Goal: To establish a pilot program that promotes uniform certification and performance standards with an emphasis on community-based preventive and wellness services, healthy behavior, and the managing of chronic diseases.

Speaking the Language of the Legislature



Disappropriation: As appropriation is a sum of money designated for a particular purpose, [disappropriation](#) is the opposite.

The Governor can take appropriated funds back when there is a budget deficit. The governor asked for 5% back from state agencies, which does not seem too restrictive, except that it is 5% of the entire biennial budget. This 5% taken in

the last 4 months of this biennium, which intensifies the impact, and administrators must cut staff time, programs, or give back reserve balances.

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

Mark the Date

March 17 (Tuesday) *Day at the Legislature*, LWVOR and AAUW of Oregon ([view agenda, maps and more](#))

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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