



Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I don't need to tell you that summer has finally arrived, and it's wonderful to bask in the beauty that is Oregon. I'm teaching full-time this summer, which is keeping me horrendously busy, but at least I can do most of my legislative work up here in the Portland area. And I have some of the best students I've ever had, so how can I complain? In this newsletter I want to let you know about some of the latest budget news (some good, some bad), along with other news affecting our district.

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"Bike Town Hall" Postponed

Senator Jackie Dingfelder, Representative Ben Cannon, and I have had to reschedule the "town hall on wheels" that was originally to be held on July 31. We're moving it to mid-September. I'll let you know the exact date in the next newsletter.

Hopefully, the new date will work out for you. We'll be checking out a variety of interesting sites in House Districts 45 and 46. (If you have any recommendations, please let me know.) It'll be a chance to get some exercise, get to know some of your neighbors (and legislators), and get your questions answered.

Hope you can attend!

Restoring SOME of the Human Services Cuts

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, the Governor has ordered 9% across-the-board cuts to state agencies in order to meet the projected \$577 million shortfall in the General Fund. Since nearly all of the General Fund is spent in three areas—Education, Health/Human Services, and Public Safety—this is where the cuts will have to happen. Still, the Legislature (through its Emergency Board of Ways and Means) does have some capacity to use savings to adjust some of the reductions, and I'm pleased (and relieved) to report that it has been able to do so to protect some of the state's most vulnerable citizens. In the end, on Thursday E-Board members were able to shift funds in order to restore \$17 million of the total \$158 million in cuts to the Department of Human Services.

Thursday's reallocation will fix cuts that were set to go into effect within the next 45 days. These restored services will enable individuals to remain in their own homes, thereby saving the state money. Equally important, these programs promote individual independence, empowerment, dignity, and human potential. Moreover, nearly all of the funding will go to pay the low-income Oregonians who work as personal care attendants, most of whom are just one step from poverty themselves. Keeping them working (and spending their hard-earned income) will help the state economy. I'm so pleased that we were able to restore these programs, at least for the short term.

Included in the restored cuts list are the following:

- Oregon Project Independence, a state-based program offering in-home assistance to senior (2,000 people served last year), allowing people to stay in their homes and avoid more expensive long-term care
- Medicaid In-Home Care programs for seniors, people with disabilities and mental health issues (over 11,000 clients in three different programs)
- Community Mental Health programs for people without Medicaid assistance (1,462 clients)
- • Developmental Disabilities Family Support Program offering assistance with extraordinary costs associated with raising a child with developmental disabilities, including respite care (1,140 families)

[I've posted a chart giving the exact dollar amounts and timelines onto the district](#)

[website. You can see it here.](#) You'll see that some of the funding only goes through February. We will keep working to restore those funds all the way to the end of the biennium (i.e., till the end of June 2011).

Needless to say, even with these restorations, most of the cuts will remain in place, and I know how tough this will be for many of you and your loved ones. But it's a start. Thanks to all of you who sent emails and left phone messages urging me to work for the restoration of OPI and the other homecare services. It meant a lot.

First Responses to the Survey

In our last newsletter I asked for your feedback regarding priorities for how to deal with the \$577 million budget shortfall. Thanks to those of you who have responded so far.

Of those who responded, nearly a third wanted us to leave the current reserves intact (that's about \$175 million), and nearly everyone else wanted to see at least half of the \$175 million kept untouched for now. Only one of you wanted to see all the reserves spent down to restore services. This isn't surprising, given the uncertainty of the economic climate that we face. I agree that we need to remain cautious. The next revenue forecast, by the way, will be announced on August 26.

Of those who wanted us to use some of the reserves to help maintain vital state services, 64% of you wanted to see the funds go to protect schools, 50% wanted to protect human services, and 17% to public safety. (Respondents could vote for one or for more than one.)

I do appreciate the preliminary guidance. [But it's not too late to provide your input. Click here to do the survey.](#)

U.S. House Votes for Education Funding, but Outcome in Senate Uncertain

As I've reported in the past, states are looking to the federal government for help in getting through the budgetary crisis that is hammering nearly all of them. In particular, they are looking for an extension of the stimulus funding that went to education and to Medicaid and other human services. Absent that funding, hundreds of thousands of additional workers will find themselves added to the ranks of the unemployed, and vital services will be badly hurt.

I'm happy to report that a small positive step occurred when on July 1 the U.S. House authorized \$10 billion to save more than 138,000 education jobs jeopardized by state budget cuts. The Senate still has not moved on the allocation, with support and opposition pretty much breaking along party lines. However, there still appears to be a

good likelihood that the funding will be approved. Some districts (including Portland Public Schools) are in fact laying off fewer teachers (and thereby keeping class sizes from rising as much) based on that assumption. I hope they're right.

In the meantime, I would ask you to contact Senators Merkeley and Wyden and let them know that you support the \$10 billion for education. Hearing of your support will help them in their effort to persuade their colleagues.

For more information about the PPS budget plan, go to <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/news/4075.htm> . For information about the Parkrose District plan, go to <http://parkroseschools.blogspot.com/> .

Congress Passes Extension of Emergency Unemployment Benefits

I don't need to tell you that many Oregonians, like people across the United States, have been suffering from being out of work due to the recession. While the unemployment rate was higher during the great recession of the early 1980s, the average length of time that the average worker has remained unemployed is much longer. In the 1980s the average time on layoff was three months. It's currently six months, but many Oregonians and other Americans have been out of work as a result of the global recession for two years or more. This has placed tremendous burdens on our families and on state services.

I'm happy to report that on July 22, 2010, Congress passed an extension of Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). This law allows individuals who were on EUC to continue claiming benefits under this program. Unfortunately, it's not going to help everyone who needs the help: the law does not provide additional weeks of benefits to those who had previously exhausted all federal and state Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. Still, it will provide help to thousands of Oregonians.

The Oregon Employment Department will automatically move affected individuals back to this program. If you are eligible to receive these benefits, you will be notified by mail.

For the most current information, [go to the Oregon Unemployment Insurance website](#) .

Walking Through Gateway Green

I've been hearing a lot of talk about the effort to create a recreational area in Northeast Portland, in the area between I-84 and I-205, from Gateway Transit Center north to Maywood Park. The northern part of this area is in House District 45. Last weekend I finally had the opportunity to walk in that area and hear about the ambitious plans and partnerships that are underway to make the project a reality.

The Gateway Green project is very much a community-based, bottom-up process, with leadership from a group called Friends of Gateway Green (FOGG!). The group's president, the indefatigable Linda Robinson, led us on the tour, up and down the 2-mile stretch of the future recreational area. You can learn more about the project by going to the project website: <http://gatewaygreenpdx.org/>

The walk was actually part of a series of walks sponsored by the City of Portland's Office of Transportation's "Ten Toe Express" project. There will be one more walk in our district, on Thursday evening, Aug. 12, at 6 p.m. It will go from The Grotto, on NE Sandy and 82nd Avenue up to the top of Rocky Butte, from whose heights you'll see stunning panoramic views of the entire district and far beyond. It will be guided by Portland author Laura Foster. I'm hoping to do that walk myself, so maybe I'll see you there. [Check out more information about this walk and Ten Toe Express.](#)

A Further Word on Maywood Park

Did you know that Maywood Park is the nation's only city within a city? It's a beautiful little area on the eastern flanks of Rocky Butte that was incorporated back in the mid-1960s, when neighbors banded together to fight the proposed freeway that became I-205. It has its own tax base and its own mayor and city council. [You can read more about Maywood Park here.](#)

I had a great time meeting with Maywood Park residents a couple of weeks ago for my July constituent coffee. They had strong opinions to share, urging me to work on reforming our current property tax system (especially Measure 50), closing more tax loopholes, creating more partnerships between agencies and between government and industry, and bringing more awareness of the challenges faced by East County residents. The meeting took place at Mt. Hood Community College's well-utilized Maywood Park campus. It was great to see the college's president, John "Ski" Sygielski, there. Ski has just been elected Chair of the American Association of Community Colleges. This is a tremendous honor for MHCC and for the residents of our district (and of course a well-deserved one for Ski).

Logan Takes a Leave of Absence, Replaced by Michelle

Many of you know and have worked with Logan Gilles, my very capable staff assistant. Unfortunately for me, he'll be gone for the next few months, traveling to Ohio to manage an important state senate campaign there. The Beaver State just won't be the same in his absence.

However, I'm pleased to announce that I've been able to find a wonderful replacement: Michelle Rogelstad, a 2009 University of Oregon grad, full of energy, commitment, and organizational ability.

Please join me in welcoming Michelle. She's eager to begin working on your behalf —helping me respond to your problems, questions, and concerns, and assisting me in doing the research and building the partnerships needed to get good legislation drafted and passed.

Reminder: Constituent Coffee Saturday, August 7

The first Saturday of next month is August 7, so that's the date for our monthly constituent coffee. We'll again be meeting from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the Manhattan Café at NE 28th & Broadway. I look forward to letting you know about some of the legislative concepts I've already submitted for the 2011 session and others that I'm working on. And of course I want to hear your ideas and priorities as well (either at the coffee or via email or phone).

Hope to see you there!

Share This Newsletter

Please consider forwarding this newsletter to your District 45 friends and neighbors. We're hoping to get as many residents as possible plugged in and in touch.

Michael

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