



# State Representative **Michael Dembrow**



February 2, 2009

Dear Friends and Constituents,

Welcome to the second week of my newsletter! I'll do my best to keep my weekly newsletters short and sweet. Your thoughts and questions are especially useful in guiding me toward writing the most informative newsletter possible. My staff and I are always happy to hear from constituents and are happy to answer any questions you may have.

## **Cracking Down on Predatory Towing**

Over the weekend, several media outlets reported on a bill that would crack down on predatory towing practices. This is a bill that I am the Co-Chief Sponsor of, along with Rep. Chuck Riley. It addresses a number of issues, including: requiring towers to notify the property owner before towing a vehicle from a private lot; eliminating the practice of towing by commission where towers are paid based on the number of vehicles they tow; and eliminating "drop fees", an abusive practice that allows a tower to tow a vehicle even if the owner is present and willing to move the car.

I have been outraged by stories I've heard about low-income people being targeted in unfair towing practices. I'm appreciative of Rep. Riley and his staff for leading the charge on this issue in this session and of former Sen. Gordly, who represented this district, and championed similar legislation in previous sessions.

See the KGW.com story on this bill: [http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw\\_020209\\_news\\_towing\\_bill.108627b1.html](http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw_020209_news_towing_bill.108627b1.html)

## **Budget Updates**

In these challenging times, it can be hard to make sense of what the budget crisis means in legislative terms, even as it becomes more apparent in individual lives. Planning ahead for the projected \$800 million shortfall for the 2007-09 biennium, all state agencies submitted proposals to cut their biennium budgets by 5% today. Because these cuts are being implemented in the last five months of the biennium this translates to a 20-25% reduction in the operating funds of each agency for the rest of the biennium. You can find the agencies' proposed budgets here:

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/home.htm>

The co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means have created budget review principles to guide the rebalancing of the 2007-09 budget, a process that needs to be completed before planning for the 2009-11 biennium can begin. You may be interested in reading those principles:

[http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/agency\\_reductions/review\\_principles.pdf](http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/agency_reductions/review_principles.pdf) (PDF).

A new budget assessment will be completed on February 20<sup>th</sup>. By then, we hope to have a better sense of what the federal stimulus package will hold for Oregon. Knowing that if we don't act now, the

Governor will have to make across-the-board cuts in March, legislative leadership has already announced they will cut over \$4 million from the Legislature's own budget this biennium. This will be the first budget cut bill on which lawmakers will act. This is a challenging process, and I will keep you informed as we continue to make hard decisions about the state budget.

### **Deadline for Legislative Concepts Arrives**

Today was the deadline for submitting concepts to Legislative Counsel. Legislative Counsel (or simply "LC") is a dedicated team of non-partisan attorneys that writes all of our bills. Legislators explain what they want a piece of legislation to accomplish, and LC does the research and writes the bill so that it conforms to the Oregon Revised Statutes. LC also writes all of the amendments to bills throughout the session, so they're very busy.

With the passing of this deadline, LC now has a month to catch up on the concept requests that have been submitted. Upwards of 4500 concepts are drafted into bills throughout the session. Once a concept is drafted, it is returned to the legislator who requested it. That legislator can then seek out other sponsors for the measure, and introduce the concept as a bill. March 2<sup>nd</sup> will be the last day to introduce new measures into the process. These deadlines were established at the beginning of the session, with the goal of finishing the Legislature's business and adjourning by the end of June.

**You can learn more about the LC process in our Weekly Video.**

### **Constituent Coffee \*Rescheduled!\***

I will be holding my first "Constituent Coffees" on Saturday, February 7th from 9:30-10:30am at the Manhattan Cafe on 2735 NE Broadway. Because the 14<sup>th</sup> is such a busy day with the sesquicentennial events in Salem and across the state, this coffee has been rescheduled. Hopefully you will be able to make it! We always appreciate RSVPs to [rep.michaeldembrow@state.or.us](mailto:rep.michaeldembrow@state.or.us).