

Rebirth Amidst the Massacre

E-Newsletter April 26th, 2011

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Last week we came up against another one of those important legislative deadlines. Bills had to be voted out of their original committees (House or Senate) by Thursday or they would die. Needless to say, anxiety levels were riding high by the end of the week, and many bills did not survive. Fortunately, none of mine died in the massacre, and one was even reborn. You can read about that one below, along with a variety of other legislative and district news.

But first, I'm proud to report on a very special award that I received yesterday. Yesterday was Oregon Student Association Day at the Capitol, with hundreds of college and university students from around the state holding a rally and lobbying legislators for better higher education funding and a number of other issues. They also bestowed their second annual "Golden Clipboard" awards upon several legislators, and I was the proud recipient (together with Sen. Frank Morse) of the award for "Excellence in Bi-Partisan Coalition" for our work on tuition equity. Pretty great, no? Being with all those students and all that energy made me realize just how student-deprived I've been feeling lately and renewed my optimism for the future.

A Bill Is (Re)Born

Two weeks ago I wrote about the sad fate of HB 2963, the Affordable Textbook Act, which died when it was not scheduled for a hearing in the Education committee, despite having passed out of the Higher Education subcommittee unanimously. This was particularly frustrating because of its laudable goal (using a number of innovative technology and purchasing strategies to cut the cost of textbooks in half over the next five years) and a feeling that there was broad support for it, politics notwithstanding.

Well, I'm happy to report that the Affordable Textbook Act has life once again, but under a different bill number: HB 3651. We were able to take advantage of another route to passage—through the House Rules Committee. The House and Senate Rules committees (and also the Revenue committees) operate a little differently than other committees. They stay open all session and aren't bound by the usual deadlines. Bills that reach the deadline and still need amendments or greater support, can be referred to Rules or Revenue (where they may or may not get a hearing).

Each legislator starts the session with five "priority bills" that can be used to create a new bill even though regular deadlines have passed. I decided to use one of mine to resurrect the textbook bill. An identical bill was drafted and resubmitted. I worked hard to make sure that a good mix of sponsors signed on to the bill, and the resulting list of legislators is impressive in its bi-partisanship. All the members of the Higher Ed subcommittee did signed on, along with a majority of those on the full Education committee. [Check out the list of sponsors and view the bill.](#)

The bill was introduced on the floor of the House yesterday, and will most likely be referred to the Rules Committee this week. I feel optimistic about a prompt and positive hearing, since both the Republican and Democratic co-chairs of the committee have signed on as co-sponsors.

Transfer Bill of Rights Legislation Passes House

This Monday, HB 3521 passed the House floor on a unanimous vote. This is a bill that I sponsored and am very passionate about. The legislation creates Oregon's first Transfer Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and requires the Joint Boards of Education to put together standards for an Associate transfer degree, which would do two main things. It would make it easier for students to transfer credits earned at a community college to a state university, and ensure that every Oregon student who has earned an associate degree receives one. This is a step toward making it easier for students to move from a community college to an OUS school, and removes barriers to degree attainment. The bill now moves to the Senate.

Programs Provide Assistance for Renovations

If you're interested in making your home (or business) more energy efficient, programs under the Energy Trust of Oregon may make it more affordable. The Energy Trust partners with non-profit entities like [Clean Energy Works Oregon](#) to provide cash incentives and fixed-rate low-interest loans to help homeowners finance upgrades like added insulation, new windows, more efficient appliances, and other weatherization projects. Your loan payments can even be added to your monthly utility bill, and may be off-set by your energy savings. [Find out more about Energy Trust programs.](#)

Workers Memorial Day April 28th

This Thursday is annual Workers Memorial Day, a day to honor and remember workers killed and injured on the job and in military service to our country. Oregon lost 39 workers who died on the job during 2010, and seven Oregon soldiers who were killed in military duty. A memorial service for these workers will be held at noon in the Capitol Mall in Salem, at the Fallen Workers Memorial. You might consider a moment of silence during your workday on Thursday. April 28th is also the 40th anniversary of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Ballots Mail for Special Election

Look for your ballot in the mailbox soon for the May 17th Special Election. Voters in Portland will be voting on two school funding measures for PPS, while Parkrose voters will be voting on a bond measure for their district. The election will also include races for a number of local and district boards including the Portland and Parkrose school boards. Ballots will go into the mail this Friday, so you should receive yours early next week. Off-year elections like this usually feature low turnout, which makes it even more important that you take the time to research the issues and cast your ballot. [Multnomah County's online voter guide can be found here.](#)

Next Constituent Coffee: May 7th @ 2 PM

We're going to try something a bit different for the next constituent coffee. Usually we meet on a Saturday morning, but this time we're shifting the time in hopes that it will allow some folks to attend who normally can't make it.

Join me Saturday, May 7th at 2 PM at Case Study Coffee (5347 NE Sandy Blvd). I'm looking forward to a little afternoon caffeine and conversation. Mark your calendar!

Until next week,

Michael