

# **Bills, Thrills and Chills (and a Constituent Coffee)**

## **E-Newsletter May 5, 2011**

Friends and Neighbors,

It's been a relatively quiet week at the Capitol. We're spending a lot of time on the House and Senate Floors, getting through the final raft of bills coming out of committee en route to the other chamber. Nearly all of them wound up passing out of committee unanimously (of course, some of the more controversial bills never did make it out of committee), often after heavy amendment, and they were passed on the floor unanimously or nearly so. There were a few exceptions, but by and large floor debates have remained muted and collegial.

My own committee work has been quiet as well. The Education policy committee is inactive right now as a result of the political and personality problems that I've mentioned in earlier newsletters; as a result, the Higher Ed subcommittee is not receiving any bills to work on. And even the Education budget subcommittee (Ways and Means) is in a relatively quiet period right now, as we await the release of the State Economist's next revenue forecast on May 12. We do expect the policy bills that have been referred to Ways and Means to start being heard next week. I'll let you know in the next newsletter.

If you have any questions about what's going on with a specific bill or policy area, please write or call. Also, do consider coming to this Saturday's constituent coffee for our monthly conversation and update.

### **Constituent Coffee: This Saturday**

Join me at 2 PM this coming Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> for some afternoon caffeine and conversation. A lot has happened since we met last month, and I'd like your thoughts on budget issues as we look toward the upcoming revenue forecast.

*What: Constituent Coffee*

*When: Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> from 2pm to 3:30pm*

*Where: Case Study Coffee, 5347 NE Sandy Blvd.*

### **Celebrating May Day in Salem**

May 1 was a remarkably beautiful day this year, and I hope you were able to get outside and enjoy it. As a longtime labor guy, May Day has always enjoyed a special place in my heart. It's traditionally been a day to celebrate workers and recognize the ongoing struggle for social justice. More recently, it has also been an occasion to highlight the need for justice for our immigrant population and for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level.

Along with Secretary of State Kate Brown, I was invited to speak to over 3,000 members of the labor, Latino, faith, LGBT and student communities assembled outside the Capitol on Sunday.

They were there to celebrate the day and call for progress on immigration reform; to discuss voting and equal representation, health care equity, and to urge the passage of tuition equity at the state level. We also heard from speakers from the Oregon Student Association, the Oregon AFL-CIO and SEIU, as well as other groups doing critical work on these issues.

I was proud to be a part of the day's events. It gave me a new perspective on May Day, one that I won't soon forget. If you'd like to [read the script of my speech that day, here it is](#).

### **Bill Updates**

As the session enters its final weeks, I'm happy to report that several of my bills continue to work their way through the process. **SB 742**, the Tuition Equity legislation, is scheduled for a hearing the Rules Committee next Wednesday. I'm very excited for this opportunity, and I'll have a lot more to say about it in next week's newsletter. This is the next step for the bill before it gets a vote and moves to the House floor. **HB 2237**, the Guardian and Conservator Task Force bill, passed another milestone this week when it was voted unanimously out of the Senate Health Care committee. It's poised for a Senate floor vote early next week, the final step before heading to the Governor.

**HB 3651**, the reincarnated Textbook Affordability bill, will be heard in the Rules Committee on Monday the 16th. With a strong group of bipartisan sponsors, including both Co-Chairs of the Rules Committee, I'm optimistic that it will be on its way to the floor soon after. **HB 3418**, which establishes a task force to study performance measures for higher education student and institutional success, is in the Education subcommittee of Ways & Means. I'm hoping we can make it a part of the ongoing conversation around higher education reform and Senate Bill 242, which is also in Ways & Means. **HB 3521**, legislation to create a Transfer Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, is up for a hearing and a possible vote today in the Senate Education and General Government Committee.

In addition to these bills, several others that I am sponsoring are moving along, as well as bills that I am a strong supporter of, including an update to the Bottle Bill that passed the House floor yesterday morning.

### **Career/Technical Education Supporter of the Year**

Nothing brightens up a newsletter like tooting my own horn.

As a long-time instructor and faculty leader at PCC, I've seen first-hand the benefits of technical programs that incorporate real-world, applied, project-based learning into their curricula. I've seen many students who didn't do particularly well in high school suddenly blossom when they are exposed to this kind of learning, and I've seen them go on to very successful careers. Even though my own background as a student and teacher is in more traditional liberal arts areas, I'm a believer in the value of CTE (career and technical education).

That's why I've been working hard to get CTE back into Oregon high schools, and why I introduced HB 3362 along with a large number of allies, particularly Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. And that's why it was particularly gratifying last week when Brad and I were honored by the Oregon Building Congress as CTE Supporters of the Year at the OBC's annual dinner.

The OBC brings together people from labor and the construction industry to work on challenges facing their industry. The ongoing lack of construction work is of course the biggest challenge that they face right now, but to their credit, the OBC is a very forward-looking group, and one of their primary concerns is with training the next generation of skilled workers. They are the lead supporter of the ACE Academy, the charter school partnership between the Parkrose, Centennial, Reynolds, and Gresham/Barlow school districts. Students at ACE spend half their week at their home high schools and half doing CTE and project-based Math, Science, and English at ACE.

The award ceremony was at the Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute, where the ACE Academy is located, which made the event particularly special. We got to see the senior projects of a number of students and hear from seniors Kristi Kachel (Gresham HS), David Baker (Centennial HS), Ray Vasquez (Centennial HS), and Brandon Rodriguez (Centennial HS). It was fantastic.

This is the kind of partnership that HB 3362 is trying to encourage and replicate—I'd encourage you to [go to the ACE website](#) and learn more about this unique partnership.

HB 3362 is in the Ways & Means Committee, and we're working to find sources of funding. I'll keep you updated.

### **Independent Report Questions Oregon Forest Management Plan**

It's hard to find a more controversial subject in Oregon than the balance between conservation and timber production in our state forests. It's clear that many of our counties rely on the revenue generated by logging state forests, and it's also important for key sectors of Oregon's economy. Logging provides thousands of good jobs across Oregon, in communities that rely on them. At the same time, we must protect critical wildlife habitat, water quality, and the ability of future generations to enjoy our forests. The State Board of Forestry is charged with finding that middle ground, and it isn't an enviable task.

As you may have read in the Oregonian last week, a recently released independent review of proposed changes to Oregon's forest management plan was critical of a number of decisions that the Department of Forestry made in changing its plans for the Clatsop and Tillamook state forests, and in particular, the criteria the Department used. I haven't yet had a chance to review the full report, but it was presented to the Board of Forestry last week. The Board will now consider whether to hold off on implementing some of the previously planned changes, including increasing the total amount of board-feet to be logged.

I've been advocating for a while now for a forest reserve system in Oregon. Currently, all acreage on state lands is cut, with nothing left off-limits except for steep slopes and areas protected by federal legislation. We should have some of the forest set aside for conservation and recreation purposes, and I'll keep pushing the Board to move in that direction. While the Board currently has the ability to set aside reserves, they have yet to do so. I'm hopeful that will change in the near future. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about these issues you can [read the OSU report here](#) or contact my office for more information.

See you Saturday,

*Michael*