

Notes from Senator Lew Frederick's constituent coffee on April 8, 2017:

The racial profiling bill, which originated in the Oregon Attorney General's office, has been approved in committee and sent to Ways and Means. Mandates tracking of data on this state-wide problem. It also, significantly, would reclassify possession of drugs from a felony to a misdemeanor and set a maximum sentence at 364 days, just short of a year, so ICE could not use the conviction to arrest undocumented individuals. Senator Frederick pointed out that this very valuable sentencing provision was suggested by a legislative aide.

Other breaking news about immigration issues: Senator Frederick shared that on April 7, Oregon Chief Justice Tom Balmer told ICE to stay out of Oregon courts, where they had been ambushing undocumented individuals who were there on Oregon court business.

Senator Frederick criticized media coverage of Oregon bills; the media tend to cover only the outrageous and headline-grabbing bills, and they neglect to give information on how bills have been amended from their original form.

The five main areas where the legislature will be acting:

1. Transportation policy.
2. PERS policy.
3. New revenue package: This has not been created yet, but there are already TV ads against it!

4. Health care costs.
5. Housing issues, including clean air.

There will be lots of bargaining and discussion, with all the electeds keeping an eye out for the next election.

Suction dredge mining (of gold) -- a volatile issue that will be up for a hearing this Monday. It is so volatile that legislators and their families are receiving threats from pro-gold-mining interests who Senator Frederick says are essentially the same people as the Malheur occupiers.

Housing crisis: Listen for Senator Frederick's floor speech when this bill (HB 2004) comes to the Senate floor. He supports this bill but is not a sponsor. He says the housing crisis is "a flat-out emergency" and cites a building in his district, home to 49 children, where the landlord doubled the rent in one month, forcing many families to move. Like many legislators, he is also a landlord, owning a duplex which he rents out. HB 2004 as amended would cover owners of more than four rental units. He points out that there is a state-wide housing crisis, including Bend, Ashland, and the Oregon coast (where airbnb has precipitated a rental inflation crisis).

Education bill about opting out of standardized testing: Not this session but possibly in the 2018 short session.

Karen Mitzner from MFM asked about what can be done at the state level about banning use of the pesticide chlorpyrphose (sp?) and will send information about specific crops and areas in Oregon.

The legislative process is not quick. When a bill is sent to Rules, or to Ways and Means, it can mean it may pass, or can mean it will languish. One way a bill can be saved at the last minute, at the end of the session, is to make it a "budget note" in a department's budget.

SB 987 and SB 1037, regarding GMOs: upcoming work sessions in Senate Environment and Natural Resources. One GMO bill failed in the House.

Senator Frederick noted a difference between the Oregon House and the Oregon Senate: In the House, policy bills can be broad and serve the purpose of educating legislators about an issue. In the Senate, bills must be more specific and aimed at a practical result.

Re-entry bills, regarding incarcerated individuals: There are 6 bills, and it is likely that 5 or all 6 will pass. These have gotten significant support. One would permit a drivers license for ex-cons who are in apprenticeship programs, so they can get to work.

Good chance of success for the Portland NAACP's priority bills: voter pre-registration for 16-year-olds (passed in the Senate), recording of grand jury proceedings (moved on out of first committee), HB 2355 (moved on out of first committee to Ways and Means). Free postage on mail-in ballots is in trouble because it involves expenditure [Senator Dembrow's aide, last week, mentioned a possible compromise of providing more free ballot box locations, which may be all that is possible to pass during this session.]

SB 868 -- removing guns from people in mental health crises: Sponsored by Senators Ginny Burdick (D) and Senator Boquist (R) who had a family tragedy involving a gun. Unusual to have chief sponsors from both sides of the issue. Senator Boquist has been attacked by the NRA about this. The bill is scheduled for a work session on April 17 (the day before the deadline for work sessions) and will get lots of media attention.

Universal Health Care: Senator Frederick is a sponsor of HB 1047.

"Cover All Kids" -- another bill on health coverage.

Things Senator Frederick suggested we can do:

1. See OCPP (Oregon Center for Public Policy) site, which has a list of ideas for raising revenue, including a gross receipts tax.

2. Contact legislators like Ted Ferioli and Bell Hansell; they need to know these are bipartisan issues -- gun safety, revenue, etc.
3. "Talk to everyone you know." Especially outside of the Portland area. Include Quaker meetings in the rest of Oregon, including Klamath Falls (water issues), Pendleton and LaGrande.
4. Support businesses that support taxing corporate businesses. New Seasons is a prime example. Exert pressure on opponents like Safeway and Kroger's.

An attendee from the Multnomah County Democrats invited us to the Second Thursday Evening "Neighbor to Neighbor" dialogues at Tabor Space.

Breaking news on election reform: Multnomah County had a ballot measure placing a dollar limit on political contributions. This passed, but now the county has referred it to the Oregon Supreme Court for an opinion on whether it is constitutional. However, the county will not present any arguments in favor of it. We can be sure that large business interests will be presenting arguments rigorously opposing it.

Notes taken by Mary Priem