

## *Friends Oregon Legislative Newsletter for April 2, 2017*

### ***Citizen Action:***

At his constituent coffee on Saturday, Senator Dembrow was asked what we can do that will be most effective. Here is his response:

- 1. Pick your priorities.**
- 2. Join an organization working on your priority, especially on a statewide basis in Oregon, reaching the rural areas.**
- 3. Come to Salem. Numbers matter! Make a difference.**

Example: April 20 rally in Salem by Health Care for ALL Oregon, on single-payer health care. Hearing on single-payer in Senate Committee on Health Care, presumably on April 20. Probably a ballot measure in 2020.

### ***Calendar:***

Here is a calendar of some upcoming events (things are moving fast, and more hearings and work sessions may be added) relating to the Oregon legislature:

#### ***Monday, April 3:***

- 1:00 – Senate Judiciary – hearing and possible work session on:  
**SB 241** – establishes Task Force on Children of Incarcerated Parents
- 3:00 – House Energy and Environment – public hearings on:  
**HB 3166** – Establishes Oregon Energy and Climate Board as oversight and advisory body for Oregon Department of Energy.  
**HB 3386** – Requires Oregon Environmental Quality Commission to adopt by rule program for facilitating compliance with low carbon fuel standards.

***Tuesday, April 4:***

11:00 – House convenes. On the House floor today, third reading (and vote), **HB 2004, ending no-cause evictions in Oregon**. This is the major housing bill of the session, and it passed in committee by a vote of 5-4, along partisan lines, in its amended form. It includes Amendment Number 6, so it is now designated as **HB 2004-6**. Mary watched the long and rather contentious work session, so if you would like more details, please contact her. Basically the bill aims to provide more stability in the lives of renters amid Oregon's housing-inflation crisis, by penalizing no-cause evictions and by allowing cities and counties to enact their own rent-stabilization ordinances. The amendment is a compromise making concessions to landlords, but the Oregon Housing Alliance took part in negotiating this compromise and appeared at the work session to urge passage. This bill will probably pass in the House on a partisan vote and go on to a Senate committee, where its future is uncertain.

***Friday, April 7:***

**April 7 is the deadline** for bills to clear their first hurdle of having a work session scheduled in their first committee. Committee chairs will decide which bills will live, die, or maybe linger and be revived later. Bills can be sent to the Rules Committee to buy more time, since there they can last until just before the end of the session.

***April 13 (Thursday)*** – EMO's Hunger Response Day. Details at their website, which is [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org)

***April 18 (Tuesday)*** – deadline for bills to have passed their work session in their committee of origin.

***April 20 (Thursday)*** – an opportunity to join Health Care for All-Oregon Thursday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at a Senate Committee on Health Care hearing on their single payer bill and the RAND study, legislative visits and a rally on the West Capitol steps in Salem in

support of universal, publicly funded health care. See their website at [www.hcao.org](http://www.hcao.org)

*April 21 (Friday)* – Day at the Legislature, League of Women Voters of Oregon. Register at their website, which is [www.lwvor.org](http://www.lwvor.org)

*April 28 (Friday)* – PSR (Physicians for Social Responsibility) gun safety program at First Unitarian Church in Portland. See the PSR website, which is [www.psr.org/chapters/oregon](http://www.psr.org/chapters/oregon)

*April 29 (Saturday)* – People’s Climate March in DC and locally

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### ***About The Deadlines:***

**April 7 is the deadline for bills to have a work session scheduled in their first committee, and April 18 is the deadline for bills to have their work session held.**

**These bills have had hearings but do not yet have a work session scheduled, as of the end of the day on Friday, March 31 (at least per OLIS, the on-line reporting system, which is sometimes not totally up to date), and they especially could use your phone calls:**

**Climate Bills:** Comments from Ed Averill: “There is a bill [HB 3269 and/or HB 2135] for ending the Global Warming Commission and replacing it with a new, more professional group under the DOE. Another [bill] [HB 3343, also SB 1007] establishes a Climate Test for projects to be permitted in Oregon. If this turns out right it will have similar effect to the resolution and laws of Portland and Multnomah County for ‘No New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure’ the law claims heritage from Obama’s ‘Climate Test’ for federal projects.”

**HB 2006**, reforming Oregon’s **mortgage interest deduction** (most of which goes to the wealthiest 20% of taxpayers). This is an area Senator Dembrow urges us to get involved in, since the mortgage interest deduction is “one of our biggest tax loopholes.” The bill would limit it to one’s first residence, and the first \$400K. This would raise about \$300M in revenue. The gain should be used for affordable housing. However, Rep. Alyssa Keny-Guyer, chair of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing, has hinted that it will not pass during this session. An argument in favor of it: Canada has no mortgage interest deduction, and that has not hurt their rate of homeownership. The present system in Oregon favors buyers but not renters. One participant at the constituent coffee noted that there is a good discussion of this issue in the book *Evicted*. (Friendly Readers made this book the reading selection for February, and the Multnomah County Library made it their “Everybody Reads” book for 2017.) This bill is in the House Committee on Human Services and Housing, whose members are:

Chair: Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer (D-46) 503-986-1446  
900 Court St. NE, H-484 Salem, Oregon 97301

Vice-Chair: Representative Andy Olson (R-15) 503-986-1415  
900 Court St. NE, H-381, Salem, Oregon 97301

Vice-Chair: Representative Tawna Sanchez (D-43) 503-986-1443  
900 Court St. NE, H-273, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Chris Gorsek (D-49) 503-986-1449  
900 Court St. NE, H-486, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Mark Meek (D-40) 503-986-1440  
900 Court St. NE, H-285, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Mike Nearman (R-23) 503-986-1423  
900 Court St. NE, H-378, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Ron Noble (R-24) 503-986-1424  
900 Court St. NE, H-376, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Carla Piluso (D-50) 503-986-1450  
900 Court St. NE, H-491, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Duane Stark (R-4) 503-986-1404  
900 Court St. NE, H-372, Salem, Oregon 97301

**HB 2845**, creating a statewide K-12 **ethnic studies curriculum** on the histories, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic minorities and social minorities. “Social minorities” means women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. In House Committee on Education, whom you can contact:

Chair: Representative Margaret Doherty (D-35) 503-986-1435  
900 Court St. NE, H-282, Salem, Oregon 97301

Vice-Chair: Representative Diego Hernandez (D-47) 503-986-1447  
900 Court St. NE, H-373, Salem, Oregon 97301

Vice-Chair: Representative Carl Wilson (R-3) 503-986-1403  
900 Court St. NE, H-390, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Paul Evans (D-20) 503-986-1420  
900 Court St. NE, H-281, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Susan McLain (D-29) 503-986-1429

900 Court St. NE, H-477, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Julie Parrish (R-37) 503-986-1437

900 Court St. NE, H-371, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Janeen Sollman (D-30) 503-986-1430

900 Court St. NE, H-487, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative Sherrie Sprenger (R-17) 503-986-1417

900 Court St. NE, H-388, Salem, Oregon 97301

Representative A. Richard Vial (R-26) 503-986-1426

900 Court St. NE, H-484, Salem, Oregon 97301

**Gun safety bills: HB 2130, HB 2237, HB 2523, and SB 232:** Senator Michael Dembrow, at his constituent coffee on Saturday April 1, said these bills will have a hearing toward the end of this week, or early next week, in the House Judiciary Committee. He thinks the bills with the best chance of succeeding are (1) closing the “Charleston loophole” and (2) mental health holds. Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Chair: Representative Jeff Barker (D-28) – 503-986-1428

Vice-Chair: Representative Andy Olson (R-15) --541-967-6576

Vice-Chair: House Democratic Leader Jennifer Williamson (D-36) --  
503-986-1436

Representative Chris Gorsek (D-49) -- 503-986-1449

Representative Mitch Greenlick (D-33) 503-986-1433

Representative Ann Lininger (D-38) 503-986-1438

Representative Bill Post (D-25) 503-986-1425

Representative Tawna Sanchez (D-43) 503-986-1443

Representative Sherrie Sprenger (R-17) 503-986-1417

Representative Duane Stark (R-4) 503-986-1404 and 541- 237-9851

Representative A. Richard Vial (R-26) 503-986-1426

**Good news: These bills have met the April 7 deadline already:**

“Cover All Kids” – HB 2726 and SB 558

HB 2864 – establishes a Cultural Competency committee in each community college and public university. The House Education Committee has scheduled a 3/28 hearing with possible work session.

SB 692 – “pre-entry” care for those entering jail or prison (helping them set their affairs in order, make decisions for the welfare of their children, put loan repayments on hold, etc.) -- hearing was 3/14, work session will be 3/28 in Senate Judiciary.

SB 241 and SB 242 – task force for Children of Incarcerated Parents, and expanding the (inmates’) Family Preservation Project – hearing and work session will be 4/3 in Senate Judiciary.

HB 2355 – establish task force to gather statewide data on police stops – hearing was 3/6, and work session will be 3/30 in House Judiciary.

SB 82 – prohibits solitary confinement of minors – **has already passed in the Senate!** Now in House Judiciary.

SB 802 – allows 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote (under current law, 17-year-olds can pre-register, but age 16 is when young people go to DMV to get their driver’s license or state ID).

SB 683 – will provide postage-paid envelopes for mailing in your ballot (some people can’t get to a ballot collection box easily). Both this and SB 802 are intended to make voting easier and encourage voter participation, and both have been rated as high priority by the Portland branch of the NAACP. (Thanks to our Racial Justice Friends for passing along this information).

HB 2210, housing assistance in the form of grants to owners to rehab and maintain their multifamily rental housing at affordable rental rates. Work session will be April 4 at 8:00 a.m.

HB 2570, Affordable Homeownership Grant Program. This bill passed unanimously in the House Committee on Human Services and Housing on March 30. It now goes on to Ways and Means.

HB 2355 – gather statewide data on police stops.

***I did not find evidence of a hearing yet on the following bills:***

- HB 2215, Right to Rest for homeless people.
- HB 3347, Department of Education to collect statewide data on harassment, intimidations, bullying, and cyberbullying.
- SB 496, requiring grand jury proceedings to be recorded.
- Wage theft bills: HB 2169, HB 2180, and HB 2181.
- HB 2909, requiring Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates to disclose their tax returns for the five previous years.
- HB 2251, forbidding minors from being incarcerated in (an adult) corrections institution.
- HB 3078 and SB 894, modifying the Family Sentencing Alternative pilot program.
- HJR 2, abolishing the death penalty in Oregon.

***Some Further Notes:***

The following are my rough notes from Senator Dembrow's constituent coffee this morning. A caveat: These are just my notes and impressions, shared in the hope they may be helpful:

The main issues are not policy issues this year.

**The “Big Six”:**

1. **Budget** – deficit is now down to \$1.6 billion by last forecast; next forecast will be in May. Revenues have been up. But this is still a huge deficit, and we can't merely cut our way out of it. Main cause of the deficit is the Oregon Health Plan; Oregon got lots of funder from the Affordable Care Act one-time payments for



Coordinated Care organizations, but that's now over. Medicaid expansion under the ACA extended health care to people up to 150% of the poverty level. In Oregon it's working well; Medicaid costs are up only about 3.5%, which keeps pace with general inflation. By 2020, the federal pickup decreases to 90% (it was formerly 100%), and this will cost Oregon hundreds of millions. Total health expenses are close to \$1 billion of the \$1.6 billion deficit total.

2. **Revenue** – One promising way of raising revenue is a gross receipts tax assessment of 2% (Measure 97 lite), now smaller than 2%, but applying to small businesses as well. This would raise about \$500 million. In exchange, businesses are demanding abolishment of the corporate income tax; this would reduce the \$500M gain to just \$300M (not enough). A bill on this would need to start in the House and would require supermajorities. It would likely go to the voters as a ballot measure. It would require support by R's and businesses. However, some of the biggest companies are tenuously on board. What can citizens do? Contact your legislators, who will be counting the number of contacts (even if they are already in favor, they can cite how many calls they received). Identify the businesses who are pro (Main Street Alliance, for example) or con, and make your shopping choices accordingly; Our Oregon and A Better Oregon have lists of business endorsers. Especially contact PGE and PP&L, who are the "big players" in this; point out the need to deal with the school funding crisis.
3. **Cost containment** – because when the business community says yes to tax, they need to be confident the money will be well spent. Areas to look at are COLAs; also, PEBB and OREBB public employees' health programs (Public Employees Benefit Board and Oregon Employees Benefit Board) might be combined to save costs.
4. **PERS** – a demand to seriously cut PERS. However, a large part of the \$1.6B deficit is due to legacy retirement costs that the courts have said cannot be cut (payments to current retirees, and rights to

already-accumulated savings of current employees). The remaining options are in regard to future employees.

5. **Health-care-provider tax** (hospitals and providers) – Another way of raising revenue is to get hospitals and health-care providers to agree to tax themselves. Negotiations on this are going fairly well.
6. **Transportation** – Oregon needs funding to relieve traffic congestion, repair roads and bridges and make them earthquake-ready, improve transit especially in rural areas, and make it safer to walk or cycle. To fund this, a supermajority is required. An initial proposal, unveiled this week by the small group that has been working on it: Multimodal transportation, not just increasing driving and creating more pollution. Mitigate our diesel problem. Increase the gas tax on a phased-in schedule. Increase fee on a new car. Increase vehicle registration fee.

Many of the policy issues voiced by the people at the coffee are controversial, and they also involve businesses stepping up and bearing costs. How does our advocacy relate to the negotiations about raising revenue, and gaining support by some R's so they will not "lock up and vote as a bloc." It's a difficult "dance" which will continue throughout this session.

Question: How does all this relate to current federal questions?

The federal area is currently a great unknown. For example, what will happen to the Affordable Care Act? On the environmental front, the federal picture is certainly bad; however the EPA was already far behind the states, and the key for us is entering into regional alliances, joining the larger movement for carbon pricing, and educating ourselves to learn how to do it right. Another certainly bad area is ICE raids on immigrants, and one of Oregon's most controversial bills this session is "Cover All Kids," since it primarily extends coverage to children of undocumented Oregonians. A question of ideology versus law. The cost of covering these children is only about \$50M for the biennium, and that is much less than the cost of doing nothing.

***From Your Newsletter Editor:*** Please stay in touch, let me know of additions and corrections, and let me know what bills you are following in Salem. Mary Priem, [mkpriem@yahoo.com](mailto:mkpriem@yahoo.com)