From: salem_update-bounces@lists.oregonstate.edu on behalf of Mills, Jock
To: CAS DeanStaff; CAS Unit Leaders; Salem Update Listserv
Subject: [Salem Update] The February Session and more
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- Candidates continue to file for May 2008 primary – March 11th deadline approaches

What to expect in the February Special Session

The legislature convenes on Monday, February 4th, for an historic month-long special session that promises to be fast paced, heavily controlled, quirky, and potentially disappointing for many.

The pace: Given the condensed time line, bills must move very quickly through the process. For example, if a bill hasn't been approved by a committee in the chamber of its origin by February 12, it is dead. (Leaders have provided exceptions for bills in the Ways & Means, Revenue, and Rules Committees.) In the Senate the pressure will be more difficult to manage since each of the 30 Senators will be pressing for the one bill he or she has introduced. There will be intense competition among the members to get a bill hearing, as well as competition with some 18 bills proposed by interim committees for consideration during the special session.

The pressure is not so intense on the House side where the 60 members were not allowed to introduce bills on their own. Nevertheless, House Committees have proposed some 39 measures for consideration. Given the limited time, not all of these bills will get a hearing, creating significant opportunities for disappointments, and the possible repercussions from angry members. Because of the pace, there will be early losers, which means that they have much of the remainder of the session, short as it is, to act on their frustrations.

In an effort to smooth the process, this month many of the interim committees have met to fine tune and orchestrate consideration of their bills in the hopes that when the legislature convenes in February, this prior work will enable smooth sailing in the initial weeks of the session.

Control issues: Given the pace, the number of issues that legislators have raised, the lack of additional resources to spend, and the fact that this is an election year, the majority leadership offices will be seeking to control the process, leaving little or no opportunity for dissent. For example, it is unlikely that the House leadership will provide the opportunity to pull bills onto the floor if they are locked up in a committee, as was possible during the 2007 session.

Because it's an election year, partisan politics will create obvious tensions especially in the House where, come November, Democrats will be seeking to strengthen their two vote majority while Republicans will be seeking to regain seats they lost in 2006. The bickering is already evident in the raft of press releases each party has issued in anticipation of the February session. For example, while the Democrats have announced their intention to increase the number of state troopers on the roads, the Republicans have responded by chiding them for not completing that task during the 2007 regular session.

The quirkiness: Anyone who has visited the capitol in the last sixth months knows that the two wings built in the 1970's to provide legislators with individual offices and staff space, have been completely gutted. (For further information about the renovation project, follow this link: http://www.leg.state.or.us/restoration/ .) Legislators have been relegated to a Dilbert's world of cubicles where constituents – and more important, lobbyists – have no ability to conduct private conversations on pressing legislative matters. While the rules may be able to accommodate members of the public by providing them access to the House and Senate floors, lobbyists will not be afforded such privileges. Limited accessibility when the timelines are tight, the workload is heavy, and the partisanship is high, will make advocacy in the legislative process an extremely difficult job.

The likely issues: Higher education issues will capture limited attention in February. The one issue gaining the most press is the effort by the University of Oregon to seek bonding for its $200 million basketball arena to replace Mac Court in Eugene. That matter is before the Interim Ways and Means Committee this week, and will be considered by the legislature in February. Likewise, Oregon Institute of Technology is seeking completion of its health professions building, a job the legislature did not complete -- for various reasons -- during the 2007 session. On the Senate side, there will also likely be hearings -- but not legislation -- on the issue of student fees.

Specific to OSU, there are a number of ancillary issues that have are being developed and pursued by committees. These include:

- Funding for the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Research Center (OSARC). Various parties are seeking funds to assist farmers and others interested in implementing sustainable agricultural practices. OSARC narrowly missed funding in 2007 -- due to various reasons -- and the interested parties, producers, packagers, and environmentalists are having difficulty in settling on just which activities should receive limited funding in February.
- Establishment of Marine Reserves. House and Senate Committees, as well as the Coastal Caucus and the Governor's office have expressed interest in addressing the issue of marine reserves off the coast of Oregon. OSU has been active in this issue through Sea Grant as well as through a number of academic programs in the Colleges of Science and Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences.

The issues that are most likely going to gain press attention over the next month

have nothing to do with higher education. They include:

- Increased funding for Project Independence to provide home care options for Oregon Seniors;
- Increased funding for State Police to provide 24/7 coverage;
- Revamping the required documentation for obtaining an Oregon driver's license;
- Revising mortgage statutes to address concerns generated by recent increases in mortgage foreclosures;
- Increasing penalties for certain property crimes;
- Providing funding for a comprehensive review of Oregon's land use laws -- the so-called "big look"
- Prohibiting or limiting access to medical marijuana for specified professions;
- Required reporting of greenhouse gas emissions for specified activities or products; and
- Enabling local school districts to charge tuition for all day kindergarten.

February 8th Revenue Forecast

In an effort to give the legislature a sense of the state's revenue status while it is in session, the State Office of Economic Analysis will issue the next economic forecast on Friday, February 8th, more than a month ahead of its normally scheduled release. Most soothsayers expect the forecast to be relatively flat from the December forecast, or slightly down, but because there has not been a significant passage of time since the December forecast it is unlikely the forecast will show evidence of fundamental structural changes in the state's economy. Nevertheless, national economic news, and localized hits to real estate and economic activities in Oregon are bracing state budget writers for a difficult road ahead as they plan for the 2009 legislative session.

Candidates continue to file for office

On the heels of the special session, legislators must make a final decision regarding their political futures. Most have been declarative, but a number of incumbents have neither filed nor announced their intention to retire. Tuesday, March 11th is the last date candidates can file for office in order to be on May 20th primary ballot. (The deadline to register to vote in the May Primary is Tuesday, April 29th.)

In the State Senate, of the 15 incumbents up for re-election, eight have filed. Those on the fence or opting out, include:

- Sen. Jason Atkinson (R-Jackson County) who has yet to file, and who currently faces no Democratic or Republican opponents;
- Sen. Roger Beyer (R-Molalla) who has yet to file and faces both a Republican challenger in the primary, and a Democrat in the general;
- Sen. Gary George (R-Newberg) who has retired, and who will face State Rep. Brian Boquist (R-Dallas) is leaving his House seat to seek this seat in the

Senate;
- Sen. Kate Brown (D-SE Portland) who has filed for Secretary of State, with Democrat Rep. Diane Rosenbaum filing to replace her.
- Sen. Avel Gordly (D-NE Portland) who is retiring, with two Democrats – Rep. Jackie Dingfelder and Gordly's current staffer, Sean Cruz – filing to replace her;
- Former Sen. Ryan Deckert (D-Beaverton), who resigned his seat and has been replaced by former Rep. Mark Hass, who has filed for the seat; and
- Sen. Ben Westlund (D-Tumalo) who has filed to run for State Treasurer – Republican Kris Telfer, a current Bend City Council member has filed to replace him.

The House – with all 60 members up for re-election – has many more vacancies especially among Republicans. Assuming the Democrats retain control, there will be a change in the leadership as current Speaker Jeff Merkley has filed to run for US Senate.

Republican incumbents who have indicated they will not be seeking re-election to the House or remain on the fence, include:

- Susan Morgan (R-Myrtle Creek) who is retiring, with two Republicans and one Democrat filing to replace her;
- Brian Boquist (R-Dallas) who is running for Senate, with one Republican and one Democrat filing;
- Jerry Krummel (R-Wilsonville) who is retiring, with a Republican and Democrat filing;
- Donna Nelson (R-McMinnville) who has not yet filed, is reported to have indicated she is retiring, and would face two other Republicans in the primary;
- Wayne Scott (R-Canby) who is retiring, with current Republican Clackamas County Commissioner Bill Kennemer who will face Democrat Toby Forsberg;
- Karen Minnis (R-Wood Village) who is retiring, with one Republican and two Democrats filing;
- John Lim (R-Gresham) who may simply not have filed yet, but faces a Democratic challenger;
- Patti Smith (R-Corbett) who may simply not have filed yet, but faces a Democratic challenger;
- Greg Smith (R-Heppner) who may simply not have filed yet, nor has anyone else for this seat; and
- Tom Butler (R-Ontario) who has resigned, but not yet replaced by the four County Commissions that must agree on a replacement, with three Republicans having filed for the May primary.

Retiring House Democrats include:

- Greg Macpherson (D-Lake Oswego) who has filed for Attorney General, with one Republican and two Democrats filing to replace him;
- Diane Rosenbaum (D-SE Portland) who is running for the Senate with five Democrats who have filed to replace her;
- Jackie Dingfelder (D-NE Portland) who is running for the Senate with three

Democrats who have filed to replace her);
- Jeff Merkley (D-NE Portland) who is running for Senate, with “Bus Project” Jefferson Smith, a Democrat, who has filed to replace him;

If you would like a complete table of all of the candidates, do not hesitate to contact me.

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Jock Mills
Director, Government Relations
Oregon State University
524 Kerr Administration Building
Corvallis, OR 97330
(541) 737-0725
http://oregonstate.edu/
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