

# Lobby sees higher ed funding as top priority

By PAUL TELLES  
Of the Emerald

Because students are trapped between rising costs and declining resources, the Oregon Student Lobby and the ASUO will be lobbying for increased state funding of higher education during the current session of the Legislature.

Lobbying priorities include reversing recent decreases in the higher education budget, minimizing tuition increases and seeking increased funding for the State Scholarship Commission.

The ASUO, in conjunction with the Oregon Student Lobby and other higher education lobbies, will work hard to "make sure that legislators have higher education on their minds," says Rich Wilkins, ASUO vice president for state and University affairs.

Higher education funding has been declining for the past decade, says ASUO Pres. Dave Eaton. If it declines much further, the University and other Oregon schools will be in danger of losing other sources of funding, he says.

In the 1967-69 biennium, higher education received 28.1 percent of the state general fund, but in the 1979-81 biennium, higher education received only 16.7 percent of the fund, according to Eaton.

To counter the trend, the ASUO is setting up a legislative network to convince legislators that they could suffer political repercussions if they continue to decrease higher education funding.

However, Eaton and Wilkins expect opposition from legislators who think continued property tax relief



should be the state's highest priority.

"We don't want to take the money from (the Department of) Human Resources," Wilkins says. "We don't want to go up against welfare mothers who say they need the money, because they do."

Regarding tuition increases, John Moore, OSL legislative assistant, says, "We're going to put up a fight, probably the biggest fight over tuition in the history of the lobby."

Despite the promised battle, "It's not unreasonable to suppose the governor will get what he wants," Moore adds.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh has asked for a 32-percent tuition increase during the 1981-83 biennium.

Consequently, the OSL won't say what level of tuition increase it's shooting for because that may quickly be accepted as the minimal increase. The group would prefer to avoid any tuition increase, Moore says.

"We're kind of in the position of a person who goes into a used car lot and the salesman asks, 'How much do you want to spend?' If you're smart, you ask, 'How much do your cars cost?'" Moore says.

The lobby will be working for increases in the State Scholarship Commission budget, especially for increased aid to students with dependent children, says OSL Executive Director Bob Watrus.

"We're trying to get enough bucks in the SSC budget that the cost of education doesn't preclude anyone from studying," Watrus says, pointing out that financial-aid increases haven't kept pace with inflation.

"Students are affected by inflation as much as, if not more than, other people," he says.

Student parents are especially needy because current financial-aid packages don't take actual childcare costs into account, Watrus says.

An interim study conducted by the Children's Services Division showed that approximately 16 percent of student parents either drop out or don't enroll in school because of childcare costs, Watrus says.

Lobbyists were close-mouthed when asked about their chances of success, saying it's too early to tell how legislators will react because they must necessarily devote the first part of the session to self-education on the issues before taking any stands.

However, considering the state's continuing fiscal crisis, there is little cause for optimism.

"The dollars are very tight and you have to work hard to get support behind the issues you're working on," Watrus says.

## Atiyeh opens Legislature with plea to end bigotry

SALEM (AP)—Oregon's 61st Legislative Assembly convened today with a plea from Gov. Vic Atiyeh to put an end to bigotry and make racial harassment a felony crime.

"Nothing defiles humanity as much as outrageous acts of racism," Atiyeh said. "I want this Legislature to make the act of racial harassment a crime in Oregon — a felony punishable by fine or imprisonment or both."

The governor also repeated his previous warnings that the

state is in the tightest money crunch in many years and said people need "to acknowledge the reality of limits" in what government can do.

The 1981 Legislature began with separate meetings of the House and Senate to elect presiding officers. Sen. Fred Heard, D-Klamath Falls, was chosen president of the Senate. Rep. Hardy Myers, D-Portland, was re-elected House speaker.

"The legislators feel that even though it (the budget) is going to be tight, it's going to be an

interesting session and one that they're up to," Heard said.

In his state of the state address prepared for delivery to a joint House-Senate session, Atiyeh said he will propose another prison bonding measure to replace an \$85 million propo-

sal narrowly defeated by voters last November.

The state is under federal court order to reduce its prison populations to ease crowding.

Atiyeh also asked the lawmakers to approve task force recommendations for revamp-

ing the workers' compensation law and changing the structure of the state's court system.

He made a special appeal for passage of his energy program which he hopes will make the state more energy self-sufficient.

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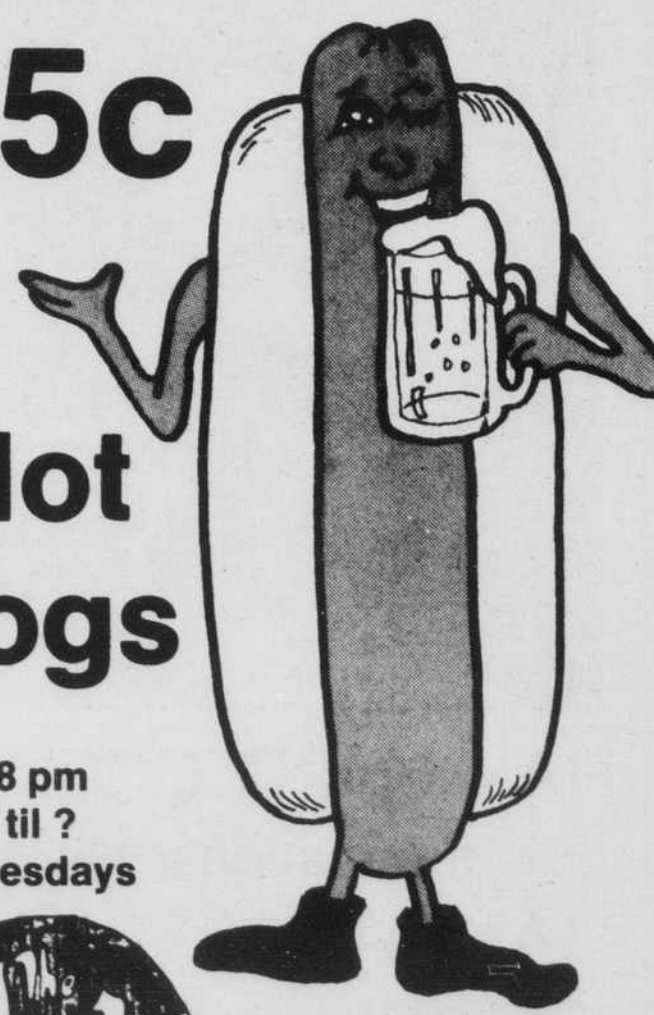
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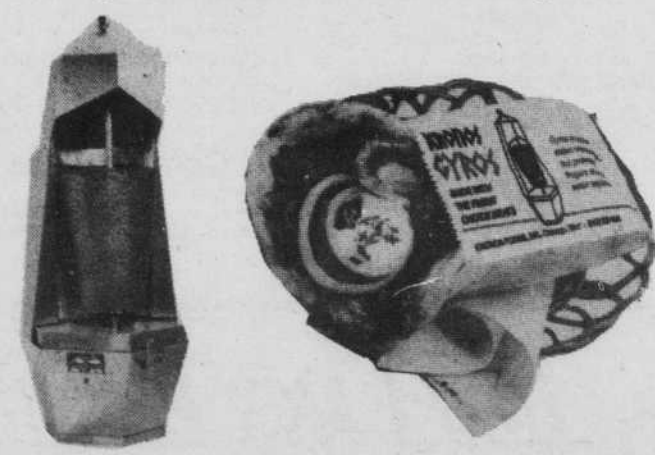
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