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# Session costs 'a bargain'

THE SPECIAL SESSION of the Oregon Legislature could cost taxpayers as much as \$225,000 — a bargain in the eyes of House Majority Office Press Representative Dennis O'Meara.

"During the regular session, the cost is about \$30,000 (per day). So compared to the cost of a special session, it's the better deal," O'Meara says.

"Besides, we've got no choice."

While there is no way to forecast how much the special session will cost, most sessions of this type have cost in the past between \$8,000-9,000 per day. The cost of the special session will be determined by how long it lasts, O'Meara says.

"It's been rumored here that the session could last as long as a month," he says. "My own personal belief is it could last 5-6 weeks."

"Here we have 90 legislatures who will probably present at least 40 different ideas. Agreeing on something may be a problem. My concern is that the Legislature may not be as expedient as they can be."

The special session will handle many bills other than the budget, O'Meara says. The length of the session may be determined by how extensive the Legislature decides to cover these bills.

"More than just fiscal matters will be discussed," O'Meara says. "If the Legislature covers these in depth, the session may last a long time."

O'Meara says legislatures often bring up bills they know will not pass, just to make a point about a problem within the government. An example of this is the sales tax bill.

"It's being used to make a point about the problems of the tax structure," he says. "I don't think the bill has a chance of anything other than being heard in legislation."

Oregon taxpayers can look forward to footing



Graphic by Russell Whang

the bill for another special session in August, O'Meara says. The reason for this session, he predicts, will be because of a lack of revenue within the government.

"When you see the state unemployment figures coming in, you can understand we are faced with massive cuts in revenue," he says.

Five percent of the money collected in income tax is used to fund the general government, O'Meara says. By the time of an August session, taxes will have been collected, and the legislature will have to decide how to make up the deficit.

"Nobody likes it. We don't like it, and the taxpayers don't like it," says O'Meara. "But it has to be done."

By Chris Courtner

## Cut

Continued from Page 7B

"We can't take the public investment in higher education and throw the system into a chaos it may never recover from," Clark says.

The Legislature should approach the problem by looking at ways to increase productivity, thereby increasing revenues, he says. Selective cuts should be made in lower priority areas, he says.

The state should also look at its fees and increase them — more in line with actual costs, Clark says. Finally, Oregon should seek ways to replace revenue sources.

Changes in the property tax relief program could help increase revenues, he says. Clark says lowering the benefit per household or decreasing the number of households eligible for relief should be considered.

Clark prefers decreasing eligibility and says he would target the program for low-income families.

Funds can also be taken from basic school support and other intergovernmental transfers and operating agencies, he says.

Both candidates agree that lowering the federal income tax that can be deducted from state income taxes could provide increased revenue. Currently, the state allows residents to

deduct \$7,000 in federal taxes. Decreasing that to \$5,000 would increase the state's cash flow.

Although taxpayers may balk at that proposal, Clark says employed people should realize that they are fortunate and that they have to assume a temporary burden to alleviate economic difficulties.

Clark is firmly opposed to instating a sales tax, calling it a "political lock that would sink to the bottom of the sea."

Rust shares that feeling.

"I don't like it (the sales tax)," he says. "I think it's regressive, and it hurts the small person."

Instead, Rust would propose a corporate tax.

"The people who get the most out of the system ought to put the most into it," he says.

A progressive income tax extending beyond the 10-percent cap would also increase revenue, Rust says. Even if that cap were extended to 20 percent, people would still pay fewer taxes than the previous year because of federal income tax cuts. Because the tax would be progressive, it would be paid by the people who can best afford it, he says.

By Barbara Morgan

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