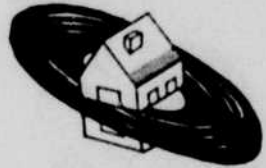


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# Wooten aims to help education

By Lisa Kneefel  
Emerald Associate Editor

Newly-sworn District 41 Representative Cynthia Wooten said higher education will have a committed advocate in Salem as the Oregon Legislature opens its 1993-95 session.

"Education is by far the leading element in Oregon's future," Wooten said, but it "hasn't had a strong advocate."

The 45-year-old legislator said she believes the very social and capital infrastructure of the state is at stake right now.

Wooten said she is ready to be an advocate for education, which she said is imperiled by a \$1.3 billion shortfall in the state's general fund.

"It's absurd for the Legislature to eat our seed corn in terms of our need for quality, accessible education," Wooten said.

The Legislature is looking for replacement revenue to maintain state services at their current levels. Measure 5, 1990's property tax limitation law, modified tax rates through gradual annual reductions. Although the 1993-95 state services budget is estimated at \$7 billion, taxes will provide only \$6.4 billion.

In 1995, the property tax rate will be limited to \$15 per \$1,000 in assessed value. The state is required to repay schools for lost property tax revenue of \$1.6 billion in 1993-95, and the deficit is expected to reach \$2.5 billion in 1995-97.

Unless the Legislature can produce a workable strategy to meet that obligation, the state will find itself in dire straits, Wooten said. She said she hopes to buy some time for voters by introducing a "bridge fi-



Cynthia Wooten

nancing" bill, one of 22 bill she says she's working on this session.

The bill would generate \$400 million of new revenue by imposing a two-year income tax surcharge and introducing new, progressive income tax brackets.

If the bill is passed, the \$50,000 income tax bracket rate, for example, would rise from 9 percent to 11 percent.

Such an interim plan would allow the state to continue to deliver service until the public can come to terms with a tax reform plan, Wooten said. She said this short-term strategy would afford time to draw up a lasting plan for Oregon's service funding.

Partisan opposition may obstruct legislators from reaching a tax reform plan, Wooten said.

"I don't think we can stand by a majority party that digs in its heels and says, 'No new taxes,'" Wooten said, in reference to House control by Republicans pledged to focus on budget slashing in lieu of tax hikes.

House Speaker Larry Campbell is reportedly working on a

budget plan that includes greater efficiencies and large budget cuts, but few, if any, new taxes, Wooten said.

"It's certainly not an equitable or enduring package at all," Wooten said. Wooten firmly believes tax reform is "the only thing that's going to keep higher education from crumbling."

Wooten said if tax reform is to materialize from this legislative session, a coalition of interests and groups must demand the opportunity to vote and review a plan.

Wooten said she has already met with 42 groups concerned with the state of service funding. Although she will make as many contacts as she can, the groups must mobilize on their own, she said.

Aside from its academic mission, education is also "a \$200 million factor in my district," Wooten said.

Wooten said she is intent on looking after the interests of the University because of the numbers employed there and because of the revenue the institution generates.

A native of Los Angeles, Wooten first moved to Oregon to attend Southern Oregon State College in Ashland. After graduating, she moved to Eugene, where she has been a resident for 25 years.

Wooten worked as a legal assistant to U.S. Rep. Jim Weaver for 11 years, and she served on the Eugene City Council from 1981 to 1989. Wooten owns a public relations firm called The Wooten Group.

Wooten is looking forward to a new challenge now.

"Some people say (the session is) going to be mean and really ugly, but I'm more optimistic," Wooten said.

## ADDRESS

Continued from Page 1

is possible.

The 1993-95 Legislature is burdened with finding replacement revenue for state services in the aftermath of 1990's Measure 5, the property tax limitation law that gradually annually reduces property tax rates.

The measure created a \$1.3 billion shortfall in the state's general fund for the 1993-95 biennium. Although the state services budget is estimated at \$7 billion, taxes will provide only \$6.4 billion.

In her speech, Roberts also introduced three proposals reflecting her "vision for Oregon."

Roberts first called for setting a national standard for rural economic development. Rural communities must be enabled to seize control of their

future, she said, but they can't thrive without utilities and roads that invite business, nor without affordable housing, medical centers, libraries and other community resources.

"I have proposed several building blocks to empower Oregon's rural communities," Roberts said. "They have the resolve, and we're offering them the tools."

Second, Roberts proposed a Human Rights Commission to fight hate crimes in Oregon. In December, Roberts recommended funding of an 11-member commission to reach benchmark objectives for stamping out bias.

Roberts said the defeat of Measure 9 in November sent a message that Oregon will not tolerate bigotry. She said that message can be reinforced while protecting opportunity for all citizens through a human rights commission.

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