

Legislature

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"I think that everyone in the Legislature realizes the need to wrap this session up as quickly as possible," said Rep. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene. As of Friday, the 72nd Legislative Assembly entered the record books at 208 days as the longest legislative ses-

sion in Oregon history. The previous record of 207 days was set in 1993, and only three of the 72 regular sessions since the Legislature was founded in 1860 have ended after July.

Prozanski, along with three fellow Democrats and four Republicans from the House, formed a committee to try to find a budget solution.

"We wanted to get together as a

group and see if we can come together with a revenue plan and expenditure plan," Prozanski said.

So far the committee has looked at the broad numbers of the budget, rather than at the specifics, Prozanski said.

Legislators have about \$10.4 billion dollars to spend in 2003-05 without gaining any additional revenue. Republicans have proposed a

spending plan of \$1.2 billion more than that amount — with about half of the revenue coming from increased taxes — while Democrats want to add \$1.5 billion in additional spending, Prozanski said.

Conflicts have arisen because Republicans and Democrats may have to surrender party ideals to agree on a budget. Republicans want to keep

taxes low, while Democrats seek to protect public services. Both sides may need to make concessions in order to achieve an approved budget.

Prozanski said though House Republicans and Democrats had different ideas on spending, he hoped that the two sides would be able to get together to come up with a "deal that we can live with." He added that the House would still need to work with the Oregon Senate in order to approve a budget.

"The reality is that we're going to have to work together diligently to come to some conclusion," Prozanski said.

And students of all ages face an uncertain future as legislators debate education funding.

Rep. Pat Farr, R-Eugene, said higher education may see a "slender" budget in the future.

"Community colleges are in a bad situation," Farr said. "We're struggling through the budget deficits to see if we can find more money for schools."

Despite the extended wrangling, conflicts between Republicans and Democrats are lessening as both sides see the necessity for a finished state budget, said Rep. Robert Ackerman, D-Eugene.

"The situation is better this week than last week and certainly better than last month," Ackerman said. "There has been a lot more progress."

Contact the reporter at shoikeda@dailymerald.com.

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Bishop

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"There's a great deal of homophobia in society and certainly within the church," said Reverend Gil Avery, a retired priest. He added, however, that the church's perceptions on homosexuality and other issues are slowly changing. Avery said there was a similar outburst when the Episcopal Church decided to ordain women in the 1970s, but the church is continuously taking in new insights.

"People don't choose their sexual orientation," he said. "Sexuality is a gift from God."

And whether homosexuality is a sin is up for debate. Avery said Jesus Christ "never said a word" about homosexuality. In fact, Jesus worked to include the excluded, spending much of his time with a host of society's outcasts, he said.

"We need to pattern ourselves after the ones we say we follow," Avery said.

Van agreed.

"To try and separate (gays and lesbians) as unworthy people is spiritual immaturity," Van said. After attending church on the Sunday after Robinson's election, Van said her congregation's response has been positive.

"It was really an upbeat feeling that justice had been done, that God loves everyone," she said.

Eugene's St. Mary's Episcopal Church also has gay and lesbian members, Reverend Nick Parker said.

"They are fully accepted," he said. "Overall, we live and work together." He added that gays and lesbians — just as all members — are expected to conform to the same high morals.

Parker added that one had to use reason and have informed debates when applying Biblical teachings to the legitimacy of homosexuality.

"We look at what the Bible says and interpret that in the context and the world in which we live," he said. "The whole church, the whole society is having to re-evaluate the boundaries."

Contact the reporter at ayishayahya@dailymerald.com.

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