

First Oregon budget meeting draws full house

WHITNEY M. WOODWORTH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The first public hearing on the state's 2017-19 budget brought a full house and strong opinions on issues ranging from health care, paid family leave, education, corporate taxes and the prison system.

More than 100 people filled the hearing room and adjoining overflow room for the first of many public hearings held by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

Members of the public, who were each able to speak for two minutes on the subject of their choosing, used the full two hours allotted for the hearing.

At the start of the meeting, co-chairs Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene, and Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, thanked the members of the public for attending the hearing.

"We want you to be active participants in the discussion of how tax dollars are spent," Devlin said.

Oregon faces a \$1.8 billion shortfall to fund current services and new ballot measure spending during the 2017-2019 biennium.

"There will be Oregonians who will directly feel the reductions on a daily basis if we must adopt a budget at this level of funding," Devlin and Nathanson wrote in an introduction to the budget framework in January.

According to the framework, Oregon's outlook will look grim if budget issues are unresolved.

K-12 education will see funding cuts and likely face teacher layoffs, higher class sizes and cuts in electives. College tuition will spike even as financial aid dips. Many will lose Medicaid, mental health care and dental care.

After a brief introduction, during which Rep. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, made clear that the vision of the budget and how to balance it was not unanimously shared by all on the committee, Nathanson turned the room over to the public.

"Now it is your turn to talk," she said.

The speakers ranged from young teens to retirees from a variety of professions. Oregon State University student Tabitha Pitzer urged lawmakers to invest in schools and tax corporates so



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Members of the public and lawmakers fill the room for a hearing on the state's budget.

that others will not end up in tens of thousands of dollars like her.

"I will be starting my life in the red, drowning in student debt," she said.

Nova Sweet testified about how the Family Preservation Project helped her and her children stay connected and thrive while she was incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. She showed photos of her children to the committee and implored them to continue funding the program.

Teen Tommy Jay Larracas led his group Youth Environmental Justice Alliance in a chant of solidarity before his testimony then spoke about how much he and others relied on public transit.

"I ride the public bus wherever I go," he said. "Without public transportation, I wouldn't know what to do."

Many demanded lawmakers put the need for reproductive health care, funded schools, disability services and the arts.

"This is ridiculous that corporations can get away without paying their fair share," said Sharlee Blackwell, a second-grade teacher at César E. Chávez Elementary School in Salem.

Just over 60 people addressed the committee. About 40 more did not get the chance after the meeting ran over time. Several people dropped their written testimonies off while others vowed to return for the next meeting.

For questions, comments and news tips, email reporter Whitney Woodworth at wwoodwort@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-399-6884 or follow on Twitter @wwoodworth



DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL
Protesters rally against banning Oregon counties from regulating GMOs during a special session in 2013.

Bill would restore local governments' control over GMOs

TRACY LOEW
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A bill to restore local control over genetically engineered crops is again before the Oregon Legislature.

The issue has been a hot topic since 2013, when a local initiative banning GE crops qualified for the ballot in Jackson County.

In response, the Legislature passed a bill during the 2013 special session banning other local governments from regulating crops or seeds.

The move followed an influx of campaign contributions from Monsanto, Syngenta and other agribusiness corporations.

Those corporations contributed more than \$127,745 to 35 legislators' campaign committees, the two Republican caucus political action committees, and three other PACs that contribute to candidates following the announcement of the special session.

At the time, then-Gov. John Kitzhaber promised a state-level solution to the problem of GE crops contaminating conventional and organic crops.

A state task force spent six months and \$125,000 studying the issue, but finished its work in November 2014 with

no recommendations.

House Bill 2469 is sponsored by Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, and Rep. Pam Marsh, D-Ashland.

It's backed by the Center for Food Safety, Friends of Family Farmers, Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families, Cultivate Oregon and Our Family Farms.

"This bill is a chance for local governments to protect family farmers with laws that are specific to the local conditions where they farm," Ivan Maluski, policy director for Friends of Family Farmers, said in a statement. "The proposed bill would let local communities decide what laws are appropriate to protect farmers growing traditional crops given the growing conditions that exist at that community level."

The bill also would allow a ban of genetically modified crops that was approved by Josephine County voters in 2014 to go into effect.

Other counties that have passed similar crop bans include Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, and Santa Cruz counties in California; San Juan County, Washington; and Hawaii County, Hawaii.

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50-cent thrift store portrait helps uncover family history

FORWARD THIS
CAPI LYNN

The sepia-toned portrait is of a woman wearing a dark-colored dress with puffy sleeves and what looks to be lace gathered at the neck. Her hair is curly in front and pulled tight in the back.

Perhaps most striking are her eyes and mouth. She isn't scowling or frowning, like so many others in 19th-century portraits. This woman almost looks happy, with an ever-so-slight glimpse of a smile.

Nora Stanfield noticed it right away, that and the handwriting on the back of the photograph.

She discovered it while rummaging through a box of old photos at the Willamette Humane Society Thrift Store.

"This one stuck out to me," Stanfield said. "This was the only one with writing on the back. I couldn't leave it."

Discarded photos regularly show up in donations to the thrift store, which has been in operation for more than 40 years. Staff and volunteers seek to return photos only if they believe they were donated in error. When a buffet was donated last year, for example, a treasure trove of family photos was left inside one of the drawers. The store managed to return them to a grateful donor.

Most times, however, they recognize photos are donated for a reason.

"We feel bad that people are giving them up and nobody wants them," thrift store manager Kit Prohm said, "especially the older ones."

The photograph in this case dates to around 1870, based on what we can glean from the information on the back.

"Someone took the time to write their family history on it," Stanfield said. "I'm sure there is somebody related to this woman who would like this information. If this was my history, I'd like it."

She paid 50 cents for the portrait and contacted me, hoping we could find a descendant who would treasure its return.

The writing, most of it legible, identifies the woman in the photo as Flora Wright Jaffery, with a listing of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren below her name. As best as we can make out, it identifies her as:

Mother of Clarence Jaffery
Grandmother of Ruth & Florence
Great-grandmother of Howard Jeffery Berry Larsen
Great-grandmother of James Anthony Hill

In the center of the card stamped in gold is S.L. Stein, Photographer. He was well-known in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, donating hundreds of his portraits of leading citizens to the Wisconsin Historical Society. I searched the online gallery, which included five women, but none were Flora.



CAPI LYNN / STATESMAN JOURNAL
A portrait of Flora Wright Jaffery was purchased for 50 cents at the Willamette Humane Society Thrift Store in Salem.

The handwriting resumes below the stamp, with a listing of family tree entries, beginning with Flora's grandfather, David Sprague, who was born in 1790 in Spencer, Massachusetts. My first thought: was he an ancestor of Charles Sprague, the former Oregon Statesman editor and Oregon governor? I did some digging online and found no obvious connection.

Flora's mother, Mahala, was one of David Sprague's children with his second wife, Sally Butterfield.

Mahala married George Wright, who was born in Warren, N.Y. They had eight children, according to the handwriting on the back, and Flora was the oldest. Flora Wright was born May 14, 1850. Her middle initial appears to be E, although it also could be C. Below her birthdate it notes she married in 1867, although no husband's name is listed.

Much of the information checks out with a family history included in the online collection of the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center in Indiana.

If you have any information to help us locate one of Flora's descendants, please contact me.

We're still looking for a descendant to claim the five photo albums left behind at a rental property. I received only a handful of responses and have few leads. A woman in Boston, Massachusetts, is researching whether there's a connection to her husband's family.

As for finding a home for the tree for all seasons, which a Keizer woman had hoped to donate to an organization, we struck out and she made other arrangements.

Let's hope for better results with this portrait.

"Forward This" appears Wednesdays and Sundays and highlights the people, places and organizations of the Mid-Wilamette Valley. Contact Capi Lynn at clynn@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6710, or follow her on Twitter @CapiLynn and Facebook @CapiLynnSJ.

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