

Salem Update: Education Funding

By Representative Brad Witt



One of the best parts of my job is being able to meet with constituents as I travel around the District. Fairs and Festivals have been a perfect opportunity to do

that, and I want to take this occasion to thank everyone who came up to say hello and chat about their concerns. It helps me to know what is on your mind, especially with regard to either recent or proposed legislation.

One topic that often comes up in conversation is the state of education in Oregon, and since we are about to embark on a new school year, I thought you might like to know what we did last session to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students. So many school districts struggled during the recession, but I'm happy to tell you that we didn't just restore funding, we were able to increase it to historic levels. We improved funding for post-secondary education as well, so that more students can afford to go to college. Here is a brief summary of programs focused on students at every level in Oregon:

- An historic \$7.4 billion K-12 budget funds full-day kindergarten, ensures free lunch for low-income kids, and boosts supports for English language learners and high needs students.
- \$700 million for universities and \$550 million for community colleges, making college more affordable.
- \$300 million to help school districts seismically upgrade and fix outdated, dilapidated and hazardous facilities.
- \$140 million for the Oregon Opportunity Grant fund, providing financial help to thousands of students.
- \$14 million to support OSU Statewide Public Service Programs, which include the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Extension Service and the Forest Research Laboratory.
- \$3 million for Aspirations to College, a program to encourage more underserved, low-income and first-generation college-bound students to attend community college.

In addition to the festivals and fairs, Senator Betsy Johnson and I conducted town halls in the District. We met with wonderful participation in Clatskanie and Sauvie Island. This was a great opportunity to discuss the overall success of the session just ended in July, and the issues that we felt were divisive and contributed to gridlock. As

rural legislators, we are keenly aware of the need to advocate for you, especially when it comes to matters of economic development. Our intent in the next session will be to work toward increased consensus between rural and urban districts for the betterment of everyone in Oregon.

Speaking of advocacy, I want to give a high five to the citizens of Sauvie Island who came together to call into question the proposed dumping of dredge spoils by the US Coast Guard on the Morgan Bar just off the east side of the Island. A group of concerned citizens sounded the alarm and a meeting was held with the Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard and others to discuss the impending action. The concerns were echoed by your representatives at all levels, from my office and Senator Johnson's to County Commissioners to our Congresswoman. On August 5th, residents were notified that the Coast Guard had decided to look for another location! Good job everybody!

Finally, we can't help but think about all of the firefighters out there trying to protect Oregon and our neighboring states from seemingly uncontrollable fires. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. For once, we really do wish it would rain...

Two File for Columbia County Commissioner

Margaret Magruder, a lifelong resident of Columbia County, and Susan Conn, a St. Helens City Councilor, have both filed for the May election. Both are running for Position 1 on the Columbia County Board of Commissioners, the seat currently held by Commissioner Earl Fisher.

A third generation Clatskanie area farmer, Magruder has served as Coordinator of the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council since 1996. She is also the owner/manager of Oregon Shepherd, LLC, a wool insulation manufacturer based in Rainier.

Active in many forms of public service, Magruder has served as a member of the Columbia County budget committee for almost 20 years. She was a member of the Oregon Board of Agriculture for eight years, serving as chair for one year, and was a member of the American Lamb Board for seven years, appointed by the United States Secretary of Agriculture. Magruder currently is a member of the Oregon Sheep Commission and the Oregon State Weed Board, appointed by the

Oregon Director of Agriculture. In 2006, she was honored as the National Earth Team's individual volunteer of the year. Her significant environmental and economic contributions to rural Oregon earned her special recognition by the Oregon Leadership Summit in 2008. She has been a Board member of the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership for over 15 years and currently serves as Vice-Chair.

For approximately 10 years, Magruder has served as a precinct committee person for the Columbia County Democratic Central Committee. She also is a member of the Clatskanie-Quincy Citizens Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC). Formerly, Magruder served on the Columbia School District 5J Board of Directors. She is a graduate of Clatskanie High School and Willamette University, and earned a master's degree at Syracuse University.

"My experience in government and civic affairs, my knowledge of natural resources and county geography, give me an in-depth understanding of

the issues facing Columbia County," Magruder said in announcing her candidacy for Columbia County Commissioner. "I think I can help in bringing balance to the environmental, economic, and cultural concerns of county residents. I look forward to working even more closely with my fellow citizens to promote the prosperity of the county we call home, while protecting its livability."

Building on a long history of public service and civic engagement in Columbia County, St. Helens City Councilor Susan Conn serves as a Board member for the Columbia Pacific Economic Development District, is Council Liaison to the St. Helens Economic Development Corporation and regularly attends the Columbia County Economic Development Team meetings.

The successful Columbia Pacific Food Bank fundraiser, Empty Bowls, was an idea Conn brought to Columbia County.

"I have worked beside you to improve quality of life in our community

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for over 26 years. I've heard your concerns and continue to work to address them. I believe Columbia County can continue to be livable and attract businesses without compromising our values," said Conn in a press release announcing her run for County Commissioner.

Public safety is a high priority to Conn, who led the recent successful Don't Bail on the Jail effort to pass a levy to keep the Columbia County Jail open and our community safer.

Conn says she understands the challenges of business owners, having operated two small businesses in the county. As a parent of five children she has seen firsthand the educational, social and economic impacts on families in this

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Cedar Side Inn

Open Mic w/ Matt Bonora
Saturday, September 26th

Karaoke
Every 2nd & Last Friday

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from opening until 9pm
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756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841



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