

Salem Update: Legislative Days

By Representative Brad Witt



I was in Salem participating in our quarterly Legislative Days when we hold hearings on important current events as well as review various task force reports and recommendations in preparation for the 2017 Session.

As you may know, the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) has proposed the creation of another National Monument in Oregon, namely the Owyhee Canyonlands in southern Malheur County. It will designate 2.1 million acres of public land, more than 1.6 times larger than all private lands in that county.

Needless to say, the Oregon Legislature needs to understand the impacts of this proposal. The Committee on Rural Communities, of which I am a member, received testimony on all sides of this issue reflecting all of the many uses of these lands. This includes ranching, recreation, and habitat preservation, all of which will see significant changes from this new designation.

The Legislature will continue to assess the impacts to all of the communities of interest who rely upon this beautiful area of Oregon for both recreational and economic activities. Setting priorities is important, however,

and our response will be valuable to our federal delegation whose job it is to represent our interests before the Congress and the White House.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, which I chair, also heard comments from several taskforces put in place last session. One that is of particular interest to District 31, given our high degree of interest in fishing and wildlife management, is a report on HB 2402, which requires the task force to identify and recommend alternative funding sources for the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Calls and emails into my office over the last couple of years have given voice to a high degree of frustration with the Department's reliance on fees, licenses and tags, each of which have been raised to the point that many can no longer afford to purchase them.

Currently, a third of ODFW's revenue comes from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Another third comes from the federal government, much of it tied to the sale of hunting and fishing equipment. The rest of the funding comes from a variety of sources, most of which is restricted for specific purposes. The taskforce, chaired by Tillamook County Commissioner Mark Labhart, has divided their efforts into two work groups, conservation opportunities and connecting Oregonians with natural resources. They are developing a survey to assess general knowledge

of ODFW and to gather opinions from the public so the legislature can develop legislation.

Finally, the Legislative Revenue Office's presentation regarding Initiative Petition 28 provides a summary and analysis of how this measure would affect Oregon's revenue system should it gain enough signatures to make it to the November ballot. The measure mostly affects C-Corporations, those with Oregon sales greater than \$25 million, and a new 2.5% tax rate would be imposed at that threshold. For example, a C-Corporation with Oregon sales of \$50 million would end up paying a total minimum tax of \$655,001. Additional revenue generated by this tax is restricted to education, health care and senior services.

I expect that the discussion surrounding the Initiative will be robust because, although it generates significant additional revenue, it will also likely cause a change in Oregon's overall corporate tax burden and will largely act as a consumption tax on Oregon consumers. If this tax had been in place for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, it would have moved Oregon to the 9th highest taxes as a percent of income versus an actual ranking of 26th. Oregon currently enjoys a business-friendly reputation... we all need to do our homework on this one to make sure that that competitive position, vis-à-vis other states, doesn't change.



reflecting the spirit of our community

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Library Program Discusses Sports in Our Communities

About a dozen people gathered at the Vernonia Library on May 24 for a discussion about sports in our communities.

"Beyond the Scoreboard: Sports in Our Lives and Communities," was part of the Oregon Humanities Conversation Project and was sponsored by the Friends of the Vernonia Library.

The program was moderated by Andrew Guest, an associate professor of psychology and sociology at the University of Portland, who has a background as an athlete and coach.

Guest engaged the audience in a discussion about personal highlights and low points in their lives that revolved around sports and discussed how sports rivalries impact our opinions about our competitors and even the rival college campuses and cities they come from.

He spent time discussing a past series of articles in the Oregonian that visited numerous high school football programs, including Vernonia, and looked at the ways those programs influ-

enced their communities.

He discussed how treating sports stars as heroes and role models impacts children and adults and about the pressure we put on youth and professionals in sports to succeed.

Guest also briefly touched on the ways sports influence communities on an economic level and said that although most people believe sports franchises improve the economies of local cities, research shows they don't. He did say that sports can have a positive psychological impact on communities and improve the level of "happiness" people experience.

Guest said he has done extensive research on various sports and their impacts on communities and discussed a recent study that looked at the consequences sports competition has on moral judgement. He noted a study which showed that 195 of 198 Olympic athletes said they would take a banned performance enhancing drug if it was guaranteed they would win a gold medal and

would not be caught, while only 2 out of 250 non athletes said they would cheat in the same circumstances.

The discussion also included comments on fan culture and the impact it has on teams, competitors and communities. Guest noted that the Portland Thorns, a women's professional soccer team, draws an average of approximately 15,000 fans per game, and said he cannot find any other women's sports team anywhere else in the world with attendance that high. "Why Portland?" asked Guest, who went on to say he believes it is because of the "bottom up" supporters culture developed by the fans of the Portland Timbers that has carried over to the fans of the Thorns, and the way the management of both clubs has allowed that grassroots culture to flourish.

Guest provided an open and engaging program that allowed the audience to participate in the discussion by sharing their thoughts and ideas on the subjects he raised.



The Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD Board of Directors will meet Tuesday, June 21, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Main Station, 12525 HWY 202, Mist, OR. Agenda items include but are not limited to usual order of business, citizen input, Fire Chief's report, financial reports and any other business needing to be discussed.

William DeJager
-Board President

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