

Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



Ever since the horrific attack on our country on 9/11, we in the United States have been in a watchful state. We have also actively defended our interests abroad with counterattacks on those who would harm us. On the front lines have been the men and women of our armed forces, and they have carried a heavy burden for more than 15 years. When they come back home, they are looking for ways to “reenter,” and many times that means reentering the education system. Last session, I sponsored, and the Legislature passed, a bill that allowed veterans to have priority status when applying for entrance into post-secondary education. After consultation with these institutions, this session we

are further defining this to also include priority status for class availability. There are other priority classifications, including athletes, so it only makes sense to offer the same thing to those who have fought for their country.

I also sponsored a bill in 2016 that created a Women Veterans Health Care Study, responding to concerns that women vets were not accessing health care services as anticipated. The study shows that women experience a number of barriers including a lack of providers who are women, a lack of urgent care outside the Portland area, and a general feeling of invisibility within the system even though they are the fastest growing demographic. Illustrating this feeling of invisibility, I would like to recommend to you a remarkable presentation at the Portland Art Museum featuring 20 portraits of Oregon women in the military. The project is intended to shine a light on women vets whose needs are too

often ignored or overlooked socially, politically and legally. The “I Am Not Invisible” exhibit will be unveiled February 24th at 7:30pm.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with some of the elected officials from the cities in my district. They were here in Salem to take part in the League of Oregon Cities lobby day. They discussed some priority legislation that will be coming up soon covering the following topics:

- Property Tax Finance Reform - comprehensive property tax reform for all Oregonians
- Restoring Recreational Immunity - restoration of full recreational immunity to landowners and their employees
- Transportation Funding - passage of a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation infrastructure funding and policy package
- PERS Reform - legislative options that create savings opportunities as well as potential new revenue sources

The folks who came in to talk to me were: Mayor Scott Burge and Councilor Patrick Kessi from Scappoose; Mayor Bob Brajcich and City Manager Greg Hinkelman from Clatskanie; and St. Helens Mayor Rick Scholl. It’s always great to get the local perspective on legislation that may come before us.



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