

# Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



Most of the bills that come before us are minor adjustments to laws that already exist but, for some reason, need to be updated, corrected or just generally cleaned up. Then there are those, maybe a dozen or so, that capture the attention of everyone including my constituents. I'd like to discuss two such bills that were voted on this week.

HB 2005A, known as the Pay Equity bill, makes it an unlawful employment practice to discriminate in the payment of wages on the basis of race, age, sex, religion or any of the other protected classes that already exist in statute. Two versions of the bill hit the floor for a vote: The Minority Report added Veterans as a protected class; the Majority Report did not. I felt that leaving out veterans was an inexcusable omission, so I voted for the Minority Report, which failed to pass on a narrow 31-29 vote. I did end up supporting the

Majority Report, which at least, further defines equal pay for equal work. It is still a good bill, but it could have been better, and now that it is over on the Senate side, an amendment may be added to include Veterans. If that is the case, it will be a win-win situation.

Another bill of some consequence was HB 2004A, which does away with the no-cause eviction notice to renters, and it repeals the state prohibition on rent control. Although these might seem to be laudable objectives, Oregon's housing crisis will only be exacerbated by the bill. Our housing crisis is a supply crisis; there simply aren't enough units to house an ever-expanding population, especially in the Portland Metro area. It makes landlords exclusively responsible for the housing crisis that the rest of our society shares the responsibility for. It will result in the sale of single family rentals and the conversion of apartment units into condos. This is not a solution to a problem. It is another crisis waiting to happen.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with many of you at Town Halls in St. Helens and Vernonia. Senator Johnson and I had fabulous turnouts and some really great discussions.

We shared an update on the work here in the Legislature over the past two months and heard about your legislative priorities and fielded questions on a variety of topics. Issues related to the budget and possible funding cuts were discussed, including the state of K-12 funding, different approaches to the PERS crisis and the pervasive need for revenue to fund services in our state.

Other topics of discussion included transportation, energy infrastructure, housing, climate change, fisheries, the Forest Practices Act and much more. We also heard from many folks in support of the National Popular Vote. I am proud to share that after much thought and observing now two popular vote winners not having the opportunity to serve, I have changed my opinion and support this effort.

# Folklife Program at the Library Features Don Webb and Fred Heller

Join folklorist Makaela Kroin and retired timbermen Fred Heller and Donald Webb for a conversation about some of the cultural traditions of Columbia County and the people who practice them. The talk will be Tuesday, May 2, at 6:30 pm at the Vernonia Public Library, 701 Weed Avenue, Vernonia, OR 97064.

This open, community conversation invites audiences to connect with tradition keepers, Fred Heller and Don Webb about the timber industry, one of the occupational traditions that makes Columbia County unique. Kroin spent several days in Vernonia and the surrounding area speaking to members of the community, documenting their traditions, and learning how their occupations shaped their lives. Learn about the historic logging industry in the area from Heller and Webb; how they learned these cultural lifeways; and how they are actively passing their skills and knowledge through the generations.

Funding for this program comes from the National Endowment for the Arts to the Oregon Folklife Network (OFN), Oregon's designated Folk & Traditional Arts Program. The project sent trained folklorists to conduct research in the Portland metro counties of Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washing-

ton, and Yamhill to meet and document culture bearers in the region. Free public programs are held in each county.

Makaela Kroin, OFN's Program Coordinator, has a Bachelor's Degree in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies from Smith College, a Master's Degree in Information and Communication Science from Ball State University, and a Master's Degree in Public Folklore from the University of Oregon. Kroin served as OFN's Summer Folklore Fellow, co-coordinated OFN's collaborative Folklife Fieldschool (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs K-8 Academy and the Culture & Heritage Archives), and conducted videographic documentation of several master artists.

Kroin produced an exhibit for the OFN and a documentary highlighting the history and revitalization of hop growing in Oregon. That exhibit is now on display at the Independence Heritage Museum, where it was featured for the 2016 Independence Hops & Heritage Festival. Besides working on the folklife survey, Kroin continues to coordinate public programs for the OFN.

For more information about public programs in Clackamas, Washington, Columbia, Multnomah, or Yamhill counties, contact Makaela Kroin at makaelak@uoregon.edu or (541) 346-

3820.

Please contact Oregon Folklife Network Director, Riki Saltzman, at riki@uoregon.edu or (541) 346-3820 with questions about the Oregon Folklife Network or recommendations for traditions, groups, or individual folk and traditional artists to be documented in the Portland Metro area.

VERNONIA'S  
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reflecting the spirit of our community

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