

State Legislatures Makes Progress on Health Care *continued from front page*

at the start of the session, while ensuring that hundreds of thousands of Oregonians would still have access to Medicaid, even if the federal government made changes to health care coverage. This tax package includes a 0.7% tax increase to hospitals that will generate \$120 million in revenue, a new 4% tax on rural hospitals expected to generate \$90 million, and a new intergovernmental transfer with Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU) expected to generate \$105 million, along with other revenue sources from insurance providers, together totaling almost \$1 billion dollars. "The Legislature found some creative ways to make up that deficit," said Lewis.

"What we did with the passage of this bill was keep 350,000 Oregonians on the Oregon Health Plan, our state's Medicaid program," said Johnson.

Senator Johnson noted that Representative Julie Parrish from District 37, representing Tualatin/West Linn is proposing a ballot measure, and is currently circulating petitions and gathering signatures, that would roll back these taxes and leave Oregon in a bind. She encouraged citizens to watch for this proposed ballot measure and make sure they understand what they are signing or voting on. "If this happens we will not be able to keep all those people insured in our state," said Johnson.

HB 3261 - Health Care Workforce Incentives and Training, puts \$21 million into a new fund that will pay for and develop health care training programs and also provide scholarships, and loan repayment and forgiveness. It was one of several bills Senator Johnson referenced as "complicated." "This addresses the idea that we need incentives in rural Oregon and nothing tells that story better than the shifting sands under the Vernonia Health Clinic," explained Johnson. "This showed that the Legislature did try to take positive steps to keep incentives that are reasonable and appropriate for general practitioners in rural places. This also did identify that we need to know more about the health

care work force needs in Oregon in order to check the provider incentive programs we put in place."

"This (HB 3261), along with SB 178 and HB 2066 - the Rural Health Tax Credit which was extended, are recruitment and retainment tools that are vitally important in rural areas," said Lewis.

Two bills that help rural communities and received bi-partisan support were SB 485 - Medical Practice Ownership, and HB 3439 - Medical Clinic Ownership. SB 485 expands the rules around medical practice ownership to allow someone other than a physician to own the business. HB 3439 allows nurse practitioners and physician assistants to own a clinic. "That says that an entrepreneur may be able to bring a clinic someplace and do good work, which in a place like Vernonia or another isolated community could be very good," said Senator Johnson.

HB 2660 - Insurance Coverage for Breast Cancer Patients, creates an educational campaign that informs breast cancer patients about all the options available to them. Currently federal law requires insurance to cover any "medically necessary" follow up treatments, whether a patient has that insurance benefit or not, including breast reconstruction surgery, breast prostheses and breast forms, and massage therapy treatments for edema. The Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance provided written testimony in hearings on the issue and noted that despite federal requirements, "70% of women who are eligible for this are not informed of their care options." Lewis concurred with the testimony and said the bill "holds insurance companies accountable." Johnson called the passage of the bill "a no brainer."

SB 860 - Mental Health Parity, ensures that anyone with commercial insurance coverage will receive mental health coverage as well. "If you receive a diagnosis, then you are treated," said Lewis.

Not all the bills that passed did so with bi-partisan support. Senator Johnson termed SB 558 -

Cover All Kids, "very controversial" and said the bill passed with votes strictly along party lines. The bill expands health coverage to all children residing in Oregon under the age of 19 who are below 300% of the federal poverty level through federal Medicaid dollars and the Children's Health Care Program (CHIP) and under the Oregon Health Plan, including an estimated 15,000 undocumented immigrant children. "This was one of Governor Kate Brown's highest priorities," said Senator Johnson. "Hospitals were generally supportive of this, because, with people insured, when they present at the hospital, the hospital will take care of them whether they are from Mars or from Madras. There is some hostility about this, but I think more people figured out that it's a good thing to have kids covered."

HB 3391 - Reproductive Health Insurance Mandate, was also very controversial according to Senator Johnson. The bill will force health insurance plans to cover women's reproductive health services, with no cost sharing, and includes birth control, prenatal and postpartum care, screenings for sexually transmitted diseases, breastfeeding support and supplies and counseling for domestic violence victims and for tobacco cessation. The bill became controversial when abortions were included. Providence Health threatened to withdraw from the Oregon Insurance Market, so Providence was carved out of that requirement. "Most people don't realize that Oregon has been covering all of these things all along," explained Johnson. The bill passed with votes almost straight along party lines.

Johnson encouraged voters to look at the Oregon Legislative Information System's (OLIS) website for more detailed information about specific bill: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1>.

"I just want to thank our state legislators for really watching out for Oregonians and our capacity for accessing health care," said Lewis. "They were very responsive to what is happening at the federal level and responded well to safeguard that for all Oregonians."

What's Happening at the Vernonia Library

Summer Reading

Summer readers can turn in reading logs through Saturday, August 12 to enter prize drawings and earn a ticket to the Oregon Zoo.

Upcoming Events

Friends of the Library

Jamboree Book Sale

Friday, August 4, 12 - 7 pm

Saturday, August 5, 9 am - 11 am and 12 - 5 pm

Hardbacks \$2, paperbacks \$1. Wide selection of non-fiction, fiction, childrens books, and dvds. Enter a raffle to win a \$50 gift card to McMenamins. All proceeds support Library programs and services.

Summer Reading Party

Thursday, August 10, 6 pm

Ice cream, crafts, and activities. Thank you for participating in Summer Reading. Let's celebrate!

Family Movie Night

Thursday, August 24, 6 pm Title TBA.

Relax and enjoy a free movie and popcorn at the Library.

Ongoing Programs

Writer's Group

Thursday, August 17, 6-7:30 pm

3rd Thursday of every month. For writers with all levels of experience.

Book Discussion Group

Monday, August 28, 5:30 pm

Last Monday of every month, 5:30 pm. Book selection for August TBA.

Storytimes

Baby and Toddler Time

Mondays, 10:30 - 11:15 am

Songs, rhymes, books, toys, and bubbles! For ages 0 - 3. Older siblings welcome.

Preschool Storytime

Fridays, 10:30 - 11:15 am

Stories and a craft/activity for children up through age 6.

No storytime on Monday, August 21, Friday, August 4, Friday August 25

Library Closure

Saturday, August 5.

Open for the Book sale only.

Opening at Noon on Monday, August 21 in honor of the Total Solar Eclipse. The Library still has Eclipse Viewers available if you need some for your family.

Library Hours & Contact

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10 - 5

Tuesday, Thursday: 1 - 7

Saturday: 10 - 4

Closed Sundays

Phone: (503) 429-1818

E-mail: library@vernonia-or.gov



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