

Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



Every session, there are issues under consideration that raise the public's awareness and cause us to receive hundreds of calls and emails. Two such measures came under consideration recently, and I thought I would take some time to explain the bills and my votes on those bills.

First, HB 4135 deals with Advance Directives, those instructions that deal with end-of-life decisions. Oregon has had these directives since 1993, but the form has not been updated for 25 years. The bill has been worked on by a wide range of interested parties, including the Alzheimer's Association, AARP, Disability Rights Oregon, the Oregon Health Care Association, and the AMA, to name a few. The form will be revised by a committee consisting of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and 12 members appointed by the Governor. Many of our callers were especially concerned that the

new form will allow food and water to be withdrawn from Alzheimer's patients.

It is important to know that current law (ORS 127.642), and HB 4135, require comfort care including food and water if appropriate, even if a person's directive indicates that they do not want extraordinary measures. When a person can no longer speak for themselves, a properly executed advance directive ensures that the patient's wishes will be followed, including the assignment of those decisions to a trusted representative. For these reasons, I supported the bill.

The other bill that drew a lot of attention was HB 4145, which expands the prohibition on possession of firearms or ammunition to include certain persons in domestic violence situations. Additionally, the measure requires the Oregon State Police to enter qualifying convictions into the appropriate state and national databases so that it will be available to law enforcement entities. Current law already applies to a person subject to a court order or who has been convicted

of a qualifying misdemeanor involving a co-habiting partner or child, but it did not apply to those in intimate relationships who do not live together. This bill was amended in the House Judiciary Committee to require a court appearance before someone can be relieved of their guns. The bill passed 37-23, and I did support the bill.

Finally, we received the quarterly economic forecast and it appears that Oregon's economy is largely holding steady. Nevertheless, the long-term impact of the federal tax plan is adding uncertainty to our budget numbers, and as a state that is largely dependent on income tax revenue for education, health care, and public safety, we are particularly vulnerable. I know that our budgeting committees are working on different scenarios to try and neutralize the negative impacts of the Trump administration's tax proposals. I will keep you posted as information becomes available.

Columbia Humane Society Surviving *continued from front page*

in bringing Canaan dogs, a unique breed from Israel, to Oregon.

Lisa Beggio is a long-time volunteer and employee at CHS and is currently serving as the Executive Director. For her, the new policy and drop in funding from the County has created a big change in how she operates her facility.

"For the past four years the Humane Society has occupied the entire building, so we were able to develop a program that was able to have a pretty stringent intake and evaluation process for all the animals we were housing," explains Beggio. "With the County moving back into the building we've lost the use of 14 of the kennels here in the facility so that eliminates our ability to take in and hold animals. So it's changed our process quite a bit."

In addition to losing the use of 14 kennels, the loss of funding CHS was receiving from the County necessitated a reduction in staff; CHS had to cut three staff positions as a result of the changes. That, in turn, has led to a reduction in days the facility is open; the facility is now only open to the public on Tuesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and by appointment only on other days, depending on staff availability.

While the program is transitioning to management by the County,

Beggio says citizens trying to reclaim impounded pets will need to be patient. "For the past four years that we held the contract, we bent over backwards and taught the citizens here that they had access to Animal Control services pretty much 24/7," says Beggio. "They could drop off a stray, pick up a dog, get their dog medication that was in impound. Now we have to go back and teach people that they have some service Monday through Friday between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm."

According to the Columbia County Sheriff's Office webpage, just updated on February 23 to reflect the change in policy, "*County Shelter operations are now separate from the Columbia Humane Society, though located at the same address. The County Shelter office is located on the East side of the building and clearly marked. The County Shelter is available by appointment. To view any dog held by the County, make arrangements with the Sheriff's Office at 901 Port Avenue, St. Helens, or calling (503) 366-4611. The Sheriff's Dog Control Officer uses social media and email to connect with dog owners. You can go to the Animal Control Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/ColumbiaCountyAnimalControl> to find any dogs currently held at the Shelter.*"

Meanwhile, Beggio, her reduced staff, and a large group of dedicated volunteers, continue working to help the animals to the best of their ability. With just three staff members, two full-time and one part-time, CHS depends a lot on volunteers. "We have a great group of about 45 regular and dedicated volunteers," says Beggio. "They did about 4,000 hours last year."

Beggio says she and her staff and their volunteers spend a lot of time and energy working to socialize dogs and correct poor behavior in an attempt to make the dogs more adoptable and also ensure they will quickly adapt to their new home situation. "We run a lot of play groups and do other enrichment and behavior modification work with the dogs that are here," says Beggio.

Beggio says CHS has a strict protocol for accepting dogs into their facility to be adopted out; all dogs have to be spayed or neutered, microchipped, and have all vaccines. Those services require funding, which CHS no longer receives from the County. When the County has animals in their kennels that have not been claimed, they planned to turn those over to CHS, but Beggio says someone has to pay for those animals to receive all the required services.



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Beggio says the number of animals brought in by Animal Control is down, while the number of animals being found and reunited with owners through social media is up. "People just aren't bringing the animals in," says Beggio. "The public is doing the County's job for them. And if those dogs aren't being brought in here, then they also may not be getting licensed or getting their rabies vaccinations." She says she wishes the public would start to ask the County some of the harder questions. "What is the real cost for Animal Control to run the program? What part of their jobs aren't patrol deputies doing when they're over here cleaning kennels?" asks Beggio.

Beggio has been working at CHS for 22 years, first as a volunteer
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