

Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



We are now halfway through the 80th Legislative Assembly and over the past two weeks the pace of activity has been intense due to legislative deadlines. In Oregon, laws are created through the committee process. Concepts are suggested by agencies, elected officials, stakeholder groups and individuals, drafted into bills, discussed in committee, and then amended to meet the needs of Oregonians. This session I have been working on some very important Public Safety issues.

Some of the highlights include:

- **HB 2085: Dam Safety.** Oregon's policies relating to dam construction, safety, and removal were established in 1929, and this bill works to update those rules and standards. The new bill was crafted by the Water Resources Department with input from stakeholders including cities, counties, environmental organizations, and farm and private dam owners. The bill was approved unanimously in committee and now moves to the House for a vote. Stakeholders have already made commitments to further improvements to the bill as it moves through the Senate.
- **HB 2289: School Safety Task Force.** This bill will establish an eight-member legislative panel to review school facility safety features such as alarms, entries, communication, shelters, physical barriers, and trainings for staff, students, and emergency responders. I sponsored this legislation because I believe the safety of our young people is paramount. The bill was referred to the Committee for Student Success by Speaker Kotek.
- **HB 2566: ATV Registration.** Oregon

currently has no registration for all terrain vehicles. I have heard from property managers like Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service, and others that the lack of registration creates an enforcement problem. When ATVs are taken into restricted areas and damage public and private lands they are difficult to trace. Another problem is the theft of and subsequent sale of stolen ATVs. Because the legal ownership is hard to establish, many ATV dealers don't allow an ATV trade-in on a new purchase. While HB 2566 won't become law this session, there is a work group forming to address these problems and the ATV registration issue.

• **HB 2980: Pesticide Reporting.** This would extend the Pesticide Use Reporting System (PURS) from June 30, 2019 to June 30, 2029. PURS collects, organizes, and reports information on all categories of pesticide use in Oregon. HB 2980 was heard in the House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use and received support from farmers, environmental groups, and workers, and after a unanimous committee vote was referred to Ways and Means for funding.

• **HB 2565: Emergency Management Department Funding.** The Oregon Office of Emergency Management is the lead entity for coordination of statewide emergency response efforts. Counties throughout the state lack the funds to hire personnel at the local level. I introduced this bill to appropriate \$3.6 million from the General Fund to issue grants to counties to hire emergency management personnel. The bill received a unanimous committee vote in the House Committee on Veterans and

Emergency Preparedness and moves to the Ways and Means Committee for funding consideration.

• **HB 2286: College Scholarship Fund for Fallen Public Safety Officers.** A college scholarship fund exists for children of public safety officers killed or disabled in the line of duty. Currently the program is funded by 10% of civil forfeiture proceeds. HB 2286 redirects that money from the Oregon 529 College Savings Account to a higher education qualified tuition savings program of the Oregon 529 Savings Network, thereby saving administrative costs. This was approved by the House Committee on Judiciary, received a unanimous Floor vote and is now scheduled for a Public Hearing April 17 in the Senate Committee on Judiciary.

While it's a busy time in Salem, I'm looking forward to getting home to the district for some of the local celebrations. April 20 is a big day in Columbia County, starting at 9:00 am with the mEGGa Egg Hunt at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. What a fun event for the kids! I always enjoy seeing their excitement and enthusiasm and meeting up with friends and neighbors. Also that morning at Heritage Park, the Scappoose Parks Earth Day Festival begins at 10:00 am. After the winter we've had, this is a nice way to celebrate spring in Columbia County and I hope to see you there.

Email: Rep.BradWitt@oregonlegislature.gov Phone: (503) 986-1431
Address: 900 Court St NE, H-374, Salem, OR, 97301
Website: <http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/witt>



Publisher and Managing Editor
Scott Laird
503-367-0098
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors

Chip Bubl
Korina Buehrer
Nancy Burch
Tobie Finzel
Aaron Miller
Karen Miller
Shannon Romtvedt
Representative Brad Witt

Photography
Scott Laird

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Vernonia's Voice, LLC
PO Box 55
Vernonia, OR 97064
503-367-0098

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Special Districts Election, May 21, 2019

Special District Elections will be held May 21, 2019 for all of Columbia County. Besides director positions that are up for election, there are two measures (5-273 & 5-274) for voters to decide on. All active registered voters in Columbia County (approximately 38,500) will receive a ballot tailored to their residential address. More election details and candidate filings (there is not a voter's pamphlet for this election) can be found at www.co.columbia.or.us. The main mailing of ballots for Columbia County will begin May 1. Overseas and out-of-state ballots will be mailed at an earlier date.

Verify registration/absentee voting

The last day for a new voter to register to vote in this election is April 30. Residents that will be out of state may request absentee ballots by either:

- Submitting an Absentee Ballot Request Form to the county elections department.
- Updating the voter's registration information. Voters can review and update their registration information at www.oregonvotes.gov by clicking the "My Vote" tab.
- Contacting Columbia County Elections via email (elections@co.columbia.or.us).

Returning voted ballots

Ballots must be received by the county

clerk no later than 8:00 pm on May 21 - postmarks do not count. The United States Postal Service has stated that ballots could take up to 5-7 days to reach county elections offices once they are put in the mail. It is advised that if you cannot put your ballot in the mail before May 16, you should plan on returning your ballot to a dropsite.

Drop sites for the election will be as follows:

Columbia County Court House
Elections Department
230 Strand, St. Helens
24-hr Drive-up Drop: Lower parking lot
Clatskanie Library
11 Lillich St.

Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD

12525 Hwy 202

Rainier City Hall

106 B St. West

Vernonia Public Library

701 Weed Ave.

Scappoose City Hall

24-hr Drop Box
33568 E. Columbia Ave

Public Certification Test

The Public Certification Test of the tabulating equipment for the Special Election will be held on Tuesday, May 14. The testing will begin at 10:00 am in the County Elections Dept. The public is welcome to attend.

FULL dish SPORTS PACKAGE!

Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7

"BIKER FRIENDLY"

EVENTS

Sat, April 27
Texas Hold 'em

- Specialty hamburgers
- 8 Draft beers & mixed drinks
- 5 Craft beers on tap
- Pool tables & satellite TV
- Free Wi-fi
- Beer & Kegs to go

Sun - Thurs 11 AM - Midnight • Fri - Sat 11 AM - 2:30 AM
733 Bridge St, Vernonia • 503-429-9999

Cedar Side Inn

Full Dish Sports Package
Big Screen, featuring Pac 12 games

Taco Tuesday
from opening until 9pm
3 hardshell or 1 softshell \$4.25

Ladies' Night
every Thursday 6pm-close

• Free Pool • Free WiFi • Specialty Pizzas

Check our Facebook page for daily specials and upcoming events
756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841