

Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt
House District 31



While my duties as the District 31 State Representative keep me at the Capitol during the week, it is always great to return home on weekends to visit with neighbors, friends, and constituents. The last weekend in April was a busy one, I spoke at a career day at the St. Helens-Yankton Arthur Academy, joined U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley for a tour of the Oregon Manufacturing and Innovation Center in Scappoose, attended Sen. Merkley's Columbia County Town Hall, and then enjoyed the 24th annual Spring Garden Fair at St. Helen's High School.

As we move into the final two months of the 2019 Legislative Session, bills are continuing to work through the chambers, and some are becoming law.

HB 2236 allows farm tractors to operate on state highways that have speed limits or posted speeds of more than 35 miles an hour and is now in Governor Brown's office awaiting her signature. I sponsored this legislation because of the important role of agriculture in House District 31 and the State of Oregon. Currently, Oregon law adheres to Federal standards requiring low-speed vehicles be equipped with the same safety features as a passenger vehicle or truck before they can operate legally on a highway. HB 2236 now exempts tractors from the low-speed motor vehicle standards.

I heard from many constituents whose farming operations require them to use a highway to move tractors from one place to another. In some instances, the farm property that was formerly contiguous was divided to build the highway they now need to access to move their farm equipment. I believe we must do everything possible to support our agricultural producers. Between 2012 and 2017, we lost 13,289 acres of Columbia County farmland, or 23.5% of all farmland in the County. Agricultural production has always been an important way of life in Columbia County, and I think

it's important to support our farmers and ranchers. I was happy to see overwhelming support for HB 2236 in the House and unanimous support in the Senate.

Registered voters are receiving their mail-in-ballots for the May 21 Special District Election. Voters will be asked to decide on candidates running for School District Boards of Education, Rural Fire Protection Districts, Port Commissions, 9-1-1 Communications, Parks and Recreation, Libraries, Water Districts, and other local governing bodies. I commend all candidates who have come forward to offer their names for consideration. These Special Districts impact the quality of our lives and provide vital services to our communities. It takes commitment and a willingness to serve others to file for office and to step up and fill these important positions. Please take the opportunity to review your ballot, learn about the candidates, and vote by the May 21, 2019 deadline.

Recently Governor Brown signed HB 2286 establishing a scholarship program for children of public safety officers who are deceased or disabled in the line of duty. The funds come from 10% of civil forfeiture proceeds and scholarships are for the cost of tuition and fees for four years of higher education. I sponsored this legislation because of the important work and ultimate sacrifices public safety officers make in all our communities. I was pleased and proud to see that HB 2286 received unanimous support in both the House and Senate Chambers.

The House Chamber took up the issue of mandatory vaccinations as HB 3063 came to the floor for a vote.

The best science and medical technology years ago enabled much of the world to begin controlling the spread of mankind's long standing, widespread, and highly infectious diseases such as smallpox, polio, and rubella. This was accomplished through vaccines.

I voted in support of HB 3063 because I remember a time before vaccines, a time when polio was a much-feared disease. We lived with the very

real possibility of contracting polio, and its life-changing and sometimes deadly consequences.

That is why it has saddened me greatly to see the revival of mumps and measles to record levels of contagion. In the United States, vaccinations made it possible to declare the eradication of smallpox in 1949, polio in the 1980s, measles and mumps in 2000, and diphtheria and rubella in 2004. But a few years ago the vaccination rates began dropping and here we are again, facing outbreaks.

A false and widely debunked report from the 1990s that linked autism to the MMR vaccine, salacious reports about vaccine adjuvants, and a well-documented anti-vaccine social media campaign led by Russian internet trolls to disrupt our society and our social fabric, have all combined to stoke fear about the efficacy of vaccines.

Vaccination rates are dipping everywhere. In House District 31 there are schools with fewer than 80% of vaccinated students. Science tells us that rates of 95% are necessary to prevent outbreaks.

In the interest of public health and safety here in Oregon I supported HB 3063.

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Bonamici Bulletin

By Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici



Thank you to everyone who joined me at my town hall meetings in McMinnville, Portland, Astoria, Gaston, Hillsboro, and Clatskanie. Town hall meetings are at the heart of our representative democracy, and the stories and insights you shared with me will inform my work on your behalf in Washington D.C.

Listening to You
About the Housing Crisis

In every community I represent, people express concern about the lack of affordable housing. Everyone deserves to have a roof over their heads, but incomes have not kept pace with housing costs. More than 1/3 of Oregonians now spend more than 30% of their income on housing. The toll on families and communities is devastating, resulting in a deep human cost as well as lost economic opportunities for individuals and businesses. I'm holding a series of listening sessions to learn more about what the housing crisis means for our communi-

ties, and to identify solutions.

There are two bills I'm already working on that will help. One would create roughly 3 million deeply affordable homes and cut rents by about 10%. Another would address chronic homelessness through funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, new special purpose Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), and case management services. Providing more resources for housing is important, and it's going to take all of us working together to make sure every one of our neighbors has a home.

Standing Up for
LGBTQ Kids and Families

In a majority of states today, there are no clear protections for LGBTQ individuals in education, employment, housing, and health care. We cannot accept the status quo in which an individual's basic civil rights are recognized in one state, but then evaporate when they cross state lines.

The bipartisan Equality Act is our opportunity to affirm that this

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