

Salem Report

By Representative Brad Witt



The 2020 Legislative Session has begun and since this is the short session, things will be moving at a rapid pace. Over the next 35 days, we will consider legislation dealing with a wide variety of topics.

Many Legislative proposals have been introduced this short session, but one that has captured much attention is SB 1530, commonly referred to as the Cap and Trade bill, a plan to reduce Oregon's greenhouse emissions.

SB 1530 is similar to the Cap and Trade bill that was introduced in 2019 (HB 2020) and relates to reducing greenhouse gas emission in the transportation, manufacturing, and utilities sectors. Large polluters would need to obtain credits for each ton of gas they emit, and there would be an overall statewide cap on emissions reducing over time.

I believe that we need to deal with climate change, and arrest the spectrum of greenhouse gas emissions, to ensure that the earth remains inhabitable for us and every other living species. However, I think SB 1530 is a flawed model, and while there are many other Oregon jurisdictions who have a higher carbon output, portions of House District 31 would be treated adversely. That's why many of my constituents joined the Timber Unity rally at the Capitol.

We have the opportunity to get this legislation right, but perhaps not during a short five-week session. Government works when we have buy-in from those who are governed. Finding legislative consensus is not simple, but it is achievable when we listen and incorporate the needs of all our stakeholders. Clean air, clean water, and carbon reduction are achievable goals but we need to work together and not just penalize those rural Oregonians who are working hard to maintain a good standard of living. The legislative process includes amending legislation to get it right, and I have ideas that would improve this bill by working across party lines to build consensus. I will continue to advocate for changes that make carbon reduction implementation fair across the state. Oregon has tackled many difficult challenges and I am confident that we can find a workable solution that neither singles out rural Oregon in general, or my district in particular, for unequal or adverse treatment.

Given the time frame of the short session, bills are moving quickly through the legislative process. In order to have livable communities, citizens enjoying fulfilling lives, building and maintaining a robust economy, people need satisfying employment. Some of the legislation I'm working on this session will benefit and support Oregon's workforce.

I was proud to jointly carry HB 4052 with Rep. Sherrie Sprenger, (R-17). HB 4052 is a bill from my House Natural Resources Committee and was unanimously approved by House members. This legislation amends residency requirements for wildlife license, tag, and permit applications. In order to claim residency, a person must have resided in Oregon at least six months before applying for tags, licenses, or permits. Merely owning property or paying property taxes, while claiming residency in another state or country will not qualify. This measure will provide Oregon State Police and prosecutors another tool to deal with individuals arrested for wildlife poaching who have claimed out-of-state residency. HB 4052 now moves to the Senate for consideration.

State economists delivered their quarterly revenue forecast which shows a \$183.4 million increase in the general fund and lottery resources over December's predictions. These increases are driven by higher-than-estimated personal income and estate tax collections. Oregon's economy is strong and we continue to see high employment rates. We need to continue to look ahead and seek equity in our economic growth for all Oregonians.

I am pleased to join Rep. Nancy Nathanson (D-13) in sponsoring HB 4143 to Protect Oregon Apprenticeship Programs. Currently apprenticeship programs can be registered at either the state or federal level. The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) then oversees registered programs to ensure their curriculum, instruction, and overall program quality. This legislation is being introduced because of proposed changes at the federal level which would create a new, parallel, unregulated system of apprenticeship programs without quality standards. The more lenient federal requirements would undermine the established quality assurance mechanisms in the current, proven apprenticeship model. HB 4143 is designed to safeguard worker protections and high-quality in-

struction in registered apprenticeship programs, by ensuring that any public funds will only be spent on apprenticeship programs that are approved using the current registration and oversight model.

While apprenticeship programs help younger, inexperienced workers, age discrimination in Oregon has become a major employment barrier to older adults. That's why I've signed on with Rep. Carla Piluso (D-50) to sponsor HB 4076 which establishes a Task Force on Age Discrimination. In a study conducted by AARP, 62% of older Oregonians have seen or experienced age discrimination on the job. In the past decade more than 2,500 Oregonians have filed age discrimination claims with BOLI. Unlike workplace discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, and sex, the legal standard for proving age discrimination is far more difficult and rarely successful. Studies have shown that an engaged, multigenerational workforce fosters a strong economy, vibrant communities, and older adults who are self-sufficient. The Task Force will be charged with identifying and evaluating the impacts of age discrimination in the workplace and establishing policy recommendations to prevent it.

For youth and young people, the Northwest Youth Corps has just opened their online enrollment in the summer school/work program. The Northwest Youth Corps offers a challenging education and job-training opportunity so participants can learn, grow, and experience success. Their programs focus on education, challenges, community, leadership, and empowerment, giving youth critical life skills and confidence. The Northwest Youth Corps was modeled after the historic Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and has been offering local teenagers an education-based, work experience since 1984. Their programs include residential conservation crews for both youth and young adults, local community crews, an internship program for college aged participants, a fully accredited high school, and a two-acre organic farm. Whether looking for an amazing summer work experience or looking to gain specific skills for a future career with land management agencies, through the Northwest Youth Corps participants can work on meaningful conservation projects, learn new skills, meet new people, and discover new op-



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One year subscriptions
(24 issues) \$35

Vernonia's Voice is published
on the 1st and 3rd Thursday
of each month.

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In order to best represent the people of House District 31, I'd like to hear from you as measures are taken up for consideration. It is my privilege to represent your interests, so if you have an issue or concern regarding a state agency, please contact my office.

If you are planning to come to Salem this month and would like to meet with me, please call in advance so we can schedule an appointment. I always enjoy seeing constituents when they visit the Capitol.

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