

Bob's Corner

There are so many topics in mind for this week that I don't know which one to choose.

Sickness is one subject. Now in my third week of "whatever is going around," my lungs seem to be clear. I'm not coughing every six minutes; my sinuses have quit trying to kill me; and the persistent headache seems to be gone. Unfortunately, I cheerfully gave the illness to my wife, Jan. She is less than grateful for my sharing.

Actually, this yucky illness reminds me of the awful malady I survived during the holidays of 2007. It was not a happy time. For many days I had trouble breathing; had to sleep sitting up because of a plugged nose. Put pungent stuff under my nose to help. It sort of helped. I felt as though my whole system was going down. Eventually it came back up.

At this point I have used several boxes of tissues. I have consumed gallons of liquid to stay hydrated. I went through a course of antibiotics. I've used over-the-counter stuff too. Now my appetite is slowly returning. The scratchy throat is gone, as are the hot flashes and cold sweats.

Besides not wanting to eat anything but junk food, the illness affects memory. There also is a fatigue factor. Being tired a lot is no fun.

I do not know from where this infirmity came, but I want it to go back. It is not welcome. Being sick is boring. So that's one topic, but I really don't want to talk about it.

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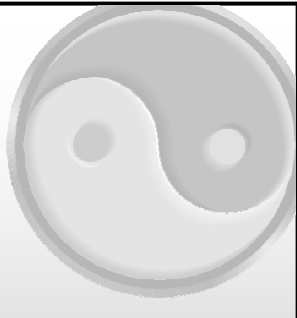
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Taxes, health care, pot Maurer town hall topics

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

The topics of taxes, health care and medical marijuana dominated discussion when Rep. Ron Maurer (R-Grants Pass) held a town hall meeting Monday, March 23 in the Marie Hill Conference Room of the Josephine County Washington Annex Bldg. in Grants Pass.

An audience member questioned Maurer about House Bill 3274, which he sponsored. If passed, HB 3274 would reform the state's medical marijuana law.

Maurer said that the voters of the state made a "very conscious decision" to legalize medical marijuana 10 years ago.

"I do think the program is broken," he said. "I would like to see private grow sites go away."

The proposal includes a \$98 per ounce tax on marijuana, which would be grown and sold through the state government.

Maurer said he does not support legalizing marijuana, and acknowledged that HB 3274 is "very unlikely" to pass. However, he said, that is not why he had the bill drafted.

"I intentionally did this to start a conversation," he said.

Approximately 20 people were present for Maurer's legislative update, which began with questions about efforts to raise the state's corporate minimum tax. That tax is currently \$10 per year, and has remained unchanged since the 1930s.

Maurer said that he has signed off on a bill to raise the corporate minimum to \$300, but he characterized the tax as a "registration fee."

"Corporations tend to pass the taxes on," he said. "It gets back to the consumers."

Questions also were raised about the state's initiative process. Maurer said that there are a number of proposals aimed at altering it, but added that he is against making any major changes.

One current proposal would require a financial analysis of possible ballot measures, and Maurer said he supports that concept.

Maurer also addressed the state's rainy day fund, which was established during the 2007 Legislature by sus-



Rep. Ron Maurer (center) met with constituents in Grants Pass on Monday, March 23. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen, *Illinois Valley News*)

pending the "kicker" issued to companies in the state if revenue exceeds expectations.

"I don't have any desire to change the personal kicker," he said.

The 2007 rainy day fund was around 1 percent of the state's budget. Maurer said that he would like to see it up to 15 percent, but that the Legislature would have been unable to build up a big enough reserve for the state's existing budgetary shortfall.

Maurer said that there is a "significant number of revenue increasing proposals" being considered in Salem right now, but that he would be unable to support many of them. He said the more than 70 tax bills that have been

introduced include several fee increases.

The issue of HB 2009 also was raised. That bill, which seeks to reform health-care delivery in Oregon, is still being worked on in the House Health Care Committee. Maurer sits on that committee, and said that the 600-page piece of legislation contains two provisions: a policy of reform and a provider tax. Those provisions may eventually be considered separately, Maurer said.

Earlier versions of HB 2009 contained a 4 percent provider tax on hospitals' net revenues, Maurer said. However, he added that representatives from Gov. Kulon-goski's office have since as-

sured him that the definition of net revenues will be changed to avoid taxing money never received by the hospitals.

The provider tax would raise \$700 million in new revenue for the state, which would then be used to draw \$1 billion in federal funds, Maurer said.

Maurer also fielded an inquiry on HB 2522, a bill he sponsored to repeal the state law prohibiting local municipalities from enacting ordinances against public drinking. That bill was the result of Cave Junction's problems dealing with vagrancy.

"It is unlikely that bill would pass in its current form," Maurer said. "It's going to have to be worked."

HB 2522 has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee. Maurer said that committee Chairman Jeff Barker (D-Aloha) is "sympathetic" to the problems addressed in the bill. He added that Sen. Jason Atkinson (R-Central Point) and Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point) have joined him in sending a letter to Barker requesting a hearing, which he said is "very likely."

"The people that represent you are supportive," Maurer said.

Letter to the Editor

(Editor's Note: Views and commentary, including statements made as fact, are strictly those of the letter-writers.)

* * *

Typed, double-spaced letters are considered for publication. Hand-written letters that are double-spaced and legible also can be considered. "Thank you" submissions are not accepted as letters.

Punishing the solvent From Tim Wallace Selma

The recent FDIC premium increase is punishing solvent banks to pay for the mistakes of the bad banks.

I'm rather concerned. My community bank (Home Valley Bank/HVB) is soliciting its customers at the counter, and the bank president has run a full-page ad in the Grants Pass *Daily Courier* requesting customers to write their congressman, as the bank's annual FDIC insurance premium has increased 1,000 percent.

The HVB FDIC premium is going up from \$119K to \$1.3M, which will affect its business expenses significantly and interest rates payable to customers.

Several articles I've read on this subject are saying that this is supposed to shore up the FDIC safety reserve fund. Some articles comment that

the FDIC didn't even collect premiums from 1996 to 2006 as it thought the interest on the reserves would cover the premiums -- until 25 banks failed last year. Another 14 banks have failed so far this year -- two in Oregon.

The bank president has written to share that Oregon banks are required by state law to maintain FDIC insurance. If the FDIC is headed for trouble, it may be time for Oregon banks to request the state Legislature to allow them to insure themselves.

In the meantime, I think that people should do all they can to stop the FDIC from punishing the solvent banks by writing their congressman and state legislators.



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