

New Law Will Open the Way to More Responsible and Transparent Contracting

For years, SEIU members have worked to bring more attention to the issue of contracting out of state and local services.

There are countless examples of contractors providing poor services—Highway 20, Cascadia and the MMIS DHS project were three well publicized examples—yet there was no clear way to hold contractors accountable or stop the trend toward expensive and ineffective outsourcing projects better handled in house.

Jackson County contracted out library services, ODOT has continued to contract more and more IT and engineering work and Wilsonville is considering contracting operation of its wastewater treatment plant.

But our recent fights did bring attention to the issue and before the 2009 session, SEIU members made it clear that contracting accountability and transparency needed to be a priority for incoming legislators.

Members prioritized it in endorsement interviews. And armed with examples of contracting that cost more than doing the work in-house would have or projects that failed because of poor contractor performance, members from ODOT, the Department of Education, local governments, DHS and Revenue made their case to legislators and also formed a coalition with other unions and good government advocacy groups to lobby for reform.

The result: Following years of persistence, substantial contracting reform passed in 2009. Two bills, HB 2500 and HB 2867, will make sure that there is more transparency and accountability in the contracting process. HB 2500 ensures that contracting information that agencies already have will be



"Responsible contracting can save Oregon taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars, but that requires transparency and accountability. With the passage of HB 2500 and 2867 during the 2009 legislative session, there are now greater protections against sub-standard contracts that will result in better government and the protection of family wage jobs."

Marty Olson, Dept of Education
Member and Contracting Out
Committee Chair