



INSIDE

Johnson named to key state Senate post

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, a coastal legislator known for tough questioning of state bureaucrats, is getting a more powerful perch to watch over state spending.

In what one legislator termed a genius move, Senate President Peter Courtney this week announced that he was appointing Johnson co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee. She will share the Senate's leadership of the committee with state Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton. The House co-chair will be state Rep. Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis.

The committee, including both senators and representatives, evaluates and then recommends budgets for state agencies.

"I do my absolute damndest to represent Senate District 16, and I am honored that the people have confidence in me to manage the state budget on their behalf," said Johnson, a Democrat from Scappoose.

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State Sen. Betsy Johnson

State Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, said "I'm thinking it is an opportunity ... for a more balanced approach between urban and rural Oregon, and I can't think of better persons to work their way through the difficult issues facing us in the upcoming session."

Johnson represents the coastal cities of Astoria, Seaside and Tillamook and a sliver of Washington County, including Banks and Gaston. Her district also includes Vernonia and the Tillamook State Forest.

Johnson comes from a civically active family. Her father, Sam Johnson, served in the House — as a Republican — representing central Oregon. Her mother, Becky Johnson, served on the state Board of Higher Education and the board overseeing teachers.

Johnson is a commercial pilot who founded and then sold a helicopter company. She was elected to the Oregon House in 2000 and served from the start on the Ways and Means Committee, an unusual appointment for a freshman lawmaker. She was appointed to the Senate in 2005.

She has been a staunch watchdog of state agency spending, said state Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton.

"If there is anybody you want guarding the taxpayers' purse, it's Betsy Johnson," Hass said.

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Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Marie Schultz was relieved her dog was saved from the fire. "I thought I was going to lose her," she said.

FIRE RAVAGES APARTMENT COMPLEX IN LONG BEACH



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Tenants Shane Ahlers, sitting, and Athena Wildenborg watch anxiously as fireman work to contain the fire.



Firemen battle the blaze at Beach Center Apartments.

Tenants lose housing ahead of holiday season

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH — Marie Schultz clutched her dog against her chest as tears ran down her cheeks.

It was a moment of sheer joy during a morning of uncertainty after a Tuesday fire ravaged an apartment building on Long Beach's north side, leaving several residents homeless ahead of the holiday season.

"I thought I was going to lose her," Schultz said.

Several people and their pets were safely evacuated and no immediate injuries were reported in the fire, first reported about 9:45 a.m. at Beach Center Apartments on the 1100 block of Ocean Beach Boulevard North in Long Beach.

The cause is under investigation. Long Beach, Ilwaco and Pacific County firefighters and police responded.

Fire responders at the scene observed little outward sign of fire. However, smoke soon began billowing from the area between the floors of the building. Much of the resulting emergency response consisted of going from room to room to track down and extinguish hot spots within the building's structure. There was no immediate information about when or if the building will be habitable.

Tabitha Kruse, 27, was one of the first to witness the fire.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Visitors to the East End Mooring Basin walk along the causeway.

East Mooring Basin causeway shut down

State inspectors recommended immediate closure

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria has immediately shut down all access to the East Mooring Basin causeway because of a severely rotting substructure.

The dock is used by fishermen and other commercial boat owners to reach their vessels, along with visitors coming to see the sea lions that

haul out in the basin during salmon runs.

The state had recommended the Port shut down all access to the causeway by Dec. 1 because of rotting pilings and cross-members found by inspectors in the substructure.

The state upped its recommendation to an immediate closure after finding more deterioration, said Jim Knight, the Port's executive director. A storm with high winds and waves could damage the causeway even more.

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