

Blackberry Pie Society hosts state rep. town hall



Senator Floyd Prozanski and Rep. Cedric Hayden answered questions from the audience during a Jan. 27 town hall meeting hosted by the Blackberry Pie Society.

State representatives Cedric Hayden and Floyd Prozanski held a town hall style meeting on Thursday, Jan. 27 with the Blackberry Pie Society sponsoring the event.

Hayden and Prozanski took questions for over an hour ranging in topics from the state budget to possible state regulations concerning vaping cigarettes. A constant theme, however, was how bills made their way through the two chambers.

While Hayden explained that the House is responsible for obtaining a written signature from representatives sponsoring the bill, Prozanski noted that the Senate has moved onto an electronic method that eliminates the need for a physical signature on the bills.

Currently, Oregon's congress is working on thousands of bills with the head of each committee dictating the possible legislation that will move forward.

Both representatives sit on multiple committees with Prozanski noting his chairmanship of the judiciary committee, the joint committee on marijuana legislation, the environment and natural resources committee and the legislative counsel committee. He also co-chairs the task force on public safety and the justice reinvestment grant review committee. When asked what bills and issues ranked as his top priorities this legislative session, Prozanski said issues concerning

the grand jury process and the recording of those proceedings were paramount. He also mentioned revenue and transportation bills would top his list this session.

For Hayden, behavioral health took priority with the representative serving on several health-related committees as well as higher education this session. Hayden spoke at length about both committee assignments noting that, "We've waited too long for it in Oregon," concerning behavioral health and that. In regards to education, Hayden told the audience he has returned from dropping his daughter off at college in Washington and the cost of textbooks far outweighed the online system Oregon implemented in the past. "There's the 40/40/20 rule where 80 percent of Oregonians are expected have a four-year degree but there are other technical jobs like electricians, plumbers, in construction that are technical jobs and if you have a good technical job, you should be considered a success."

Several questions concerning the budget were raised with the state facing a shortfall of nearly \$2 billion. Hayden noted that the economy in Oregon was strong and that deficit may shrink while audience members inquired as to the possibility of using the marijuana tax to close the gap. The State of Oregon legislative session began on February 1 and is scheduled to last 160 days.

Oregon legislature to tackle issues

BY CAITLYN MAY
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State legislators began the 2017 legislative session on Wednesday, February 1. Oregon's lawmakers had a packed agenda ahead of the session with the state facing a nearly \$2 billion deficit, transportation needs and confusion over the state of health care funds. Moreover, local governments have suggested potential laws and raised concerns over bills they say could greatly affect their ability to govern and run their cities. The following is run-down of some of the major bills and issues currently working their way through both houses:

Raising the tobacco age: Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward and Rep. Rich Vial are the chief sponsors of a bill that would raise the age of legal tobacco purchasers to 21 from 18. The pair cite the health risks of smoking and the mountain of data tied to the eventual heavy costs of the habit both financially and physically. The issue was raised at a local town hall event where Rep. Cedric Hayden and Senator Floyd Prozanski took questions from local residents. A suggestion was made from the audience that increasing the age of legal tobacco sales and adding a tax to vaping products would improve the state's financial outlook on health costs and the overall shortfall.

The budget: Oregon is facing a \$1.7 billion budgetary shortfall and the legislature is scrambling for funds to cover the gap. Among the top issues the houses are facing in balancing the books is the Public Employee and Retirement System (PERS). The system has been a point of contention as the legislature geared up for the 2017

session with over 100,000 individuals currently receiving funds from PERS. Senate Bill 590 and Senate Bill 560 aim to address the system's funding shortfall with 559 altering the way the employees' final average salaries are calculated and 560 would shift money from employee-owned retirement accounts to their pensions.

Transportation: The Joint Transportation Preservation and Modernization Committee reported the state of Oregon should spend an additional \$1.3 billion a year on its transportation infrastructure. However, with a deficit nearing \$2 billion, the legislature says that figure is out of reach and projects must be taken off the long list of needed upgrades and repairs which include seismic upgrades in the face of sobering reports that Oregon is due for a major earthquake. It is unknown what projects the legislature is set to set aside due to budgetary restrictions.

Distracted driving: Senate President Peter Courtney planned to head a bill that would introduce additional fees and possible jail time for individuals who drive while distracted. Early reports of the bill would have first-time offenders facing up to a year in prison and fines up to \$6,250. Those who are found to have multiple violations in 10 years will face up to five years in prison and up to

\$125,000 in fines.

Pre-existing conditions: While Oregon's houses are debating bills, the United States Congress is also in session with Oregon representative Greg Walden introducing a bill to maintain a provision of the Affordable Care Act which prevents companies from denying insurance based on pre-existing conditions.



Encourage children to floss

Children should learn that flossing is just as important as brushing.

Learning to brush their own teeth is a lesson all children must master. Although parents ultimately may have children who become proficient at brushing their own teeth, getting them to floss is generally more difficult.

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 41 percent of children aged 2 to 11 had tooth decay in their first teeth. Dental caries are common among children, likely because they have not become proficient at taking care of their teeth.

Soft, sticky foods are commonplace in young kids' diets, and these can promote decay. Even well-intentioned gummy vitamins can be sources of dental decay. Oftentimes, these foods become lodged between the teeth or on the surface of molars. If left in contact with the teeth for too long, food particles become a source of carbohydrates for oral bacteria, and cavities may appear as a result.

To remove food particles from between the teeth, children must floss, advises the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists. It is recommended that parents help their children to floss as soon as two teeth are touching and continue to do so until the child is around the age of 8, when a child should have enough dexterity to do it on his or her own.

Flossing is essential to making sure children do

not experience cavities at an early age, and it can establish practices that promote oral health throughout life. Despite being so important, many parents fail to encourage flossing or are at a loss as to how to make it enjoyable and effective.

Although regular dental floss is one of the first tools for flossing, the dexterity required to wind the floss around little fingers and then thoroughly clean the teeth may discourage children. Parents can look into the wide array of flossing helpers available at the store. In fact, many age-appropriate flossers are now available that feature fun designs and smaller profiles to fit into kids' mouths more easily. Flossers may be attached to a handle to make back teeth more accessible and promote more effective flossing. Manufacturers such as DenTek, Butler GUM, Plackers Kids, Dr. Fresh, Oral-B, and Brush Buddies offer children's flossers.

Kids who shy away from flossing may be more likely to use a children's water flosser. In lieu of string floss, a water flosser uses a pressurized stream of water to dislodge food from between teeth. Although a water flosser may be more messy, children may enjoy the opportunity to "play" with water and the cleaning sensation provided.

To prevent the buildup of plaque and the development of dental caries, parents should educate children about proper flossing techniques.

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