

Brown endorses gross receipts tax

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown announced Thursday that she is endorsing a controversial corporate sales tax measure on November's ballot.

Initiative Petition 28, on track to be called Measure 97 on the ballot, levies a 2.5-percent tax on certain corporations' Oregon gross receipts exceeding \$25 million.

"I have spent my career fighting to make Oregon a place where everyone can thrive," Brown said in a statement. "I support Measure 97 because there is a basic unfairness in our



Gov. Kate Brown

tax system that makes working families pay an increasing share for state and local services, including public schools, senior services, and health care. By some measures, Oregon is among the lowest in corporate taxes, and Oregonians expect everyone to pay their fair share."

The tax would pour an estimated \$3 billion a year into state coffers but slow job growth and bump up consumer prices, according to the non-partisan Legislative Revenue Office.

"Our state cannot move forward over the next decade without a stable revenue base," Brown said Thursday. "Measure 97 is an important step forward, and I will make sure the funds the measure yields go towards schools, health care, and seniors, as the voters expect."

"State leaders before me have repeatedly tried and failed to solve the problem of adequate and stable funding for schools and other state services. Every solution has had strengths and weaknesses in terms of fairness and economic impact. None has succeeded in bringing the busi-

ness community, individual and family taxpayers, service providers, and advocates together."

Bud Pierce, Brown's Republican challenger in November's governor's race, said he was disappointed that Brown is supporting what would be the largest sales tax increase in Oregon's history.

"If passed, this tax increase would greatly raise the cost of living in Oregon," Pierce said in a statement. "Everyone, including low-income families would be paying on average more than \$1,800 (sic) per family more for goods and services. A tax increase like this will not help anyone. It will

hurt low-income families in Oregon the most."

The Legislative Revenue Office estimated that the tax would cause price increases that would cost a family earning median income more than \$600 more per year in the form of increased prices on daily needs, such as food, fuel and electricity.

Brown said that state leaders have repeatedly failed to come up with another solution to Oregon's unstable funding system for schools and other state services.

"Every solution has had strengths and weaknesses in terms of fairness and economic impact," she said.

AG seeks reforms in public records law

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Legislation headed for the 2017 session would set clearer deadlines for public agencies to respond to public records request, give priority to the public's right to access records and provide a manual for understanding exemptions to disclosure.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum proposed the reforms to the public records law based on recommendations by a task force she formed about nine months ago.

The proposal gives public agencies a five-day deadline to acknowledge receipt of public records requests and 10 days to either furnish records or provide a reason for the delay. The Attorney General's Office also would be required to maintain a catalog of disclosure exemptions and make that available free of charge to the public. The language in the legislation also gives priority to the public's right to know.

"It is important to emphasize that we cannot imple-

ment these suggested reforms without the active support and involvement of our governor and the Legislature," Rosenblum said in a statement.

The Attorney General's Office will accept comments about the proposal from journalists and the public at an Aug. 18 hearing in Bend.

The task force that recommended the changes to the public records law includes journalists, state and local governments, other interest groups and individuals.

Rosenblum formed the task force in September to review and simplify more than 500 exemptions to the public records law and to find ways to make records more accessible to the public.

The task force also plans to examine the fees that public bodies charge for records and consider whether the state should create a position to help the public access records from state government, said Michael Kron, special counsel to the attorney general, who has headed up the public records law review.

Portland students to learn about ag, rangeland at Unity school

By Eric Mortenson
EO Media Group

Burnt River School's invitation to Portland students paid off, and the rural Eastern Oregon school will host up to eight urban kids when classes begin next fall, and eight more in the spring.

"It's happening," Superintendent Lorrie Andrews said.

The district is arranging places for the students to stay while in school. The school, which had a total of 34 students in 2015-16, offers the Burnt River Integrated Agriculture/Science Research Ranch program, or BRIARR, a dip into the ag and natural resource issues common to the area. The K-12 public charter school is in Unity, about 50 miles east of John Day.

Students will learn about animal production science, sustainable rangeland science and forest restoration studies, and do water quality monitoring with the Powder



Contributed photo/Burnt River School District
The entire student body and staff of Burnt River School poses on picture day in September 2015. The small, Eastern Oregon school will host up to eight Portland high school students this fall to teach them about agriculture.

Basin Watershed Council. The invitation to Portland students was intended to help bridge the urban-rural divide, but it could help the district financially, as well. The state provides districts about \$7,100 per student, and that

funding follows the student during their time in the rural district.

Portland Public Schools sent an email to its high school families last spring, telling them of the opportunity, and Andrews received about two

dozen email queries within a couple days.

After clearing interviews and securing placement with host families, eight girls will attend the school fall semester, and eight boys will attend in spring.

Legislators, friends mourn death of state Sen. Alan Bates

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Oregon state Sen. Alan Bates, a physician who represented Southern Oregon for

15 years, died Friday. Bates, 71, of Ashland, died suddenly while on a fishing trip with his son. Senate President Peter Courtney confirmed his death

early Saturday. Courtney said he learned of Bates' death late Friday from Gov. Kate Brown. His family issued a statement Saturday indicating that Bates' death was unexpected.

Bates served in the Senate since 2004 and served for four years before that in the House. "We are comforted in the fact that he passed after a day of doing something he loved: Fly fishing with his son," Bates' family said. "We will always think of him when we hear the sound of the river, feel the summer sunlight and see a fly line cast upon the water."

Bates practiced for more than 30 years as a primary care physician in Medford, his family said. He is credited with saving lives both in his practice and at the Capitol. Sen. Alan Olsen, a Republican from Canby, said Bates saved his life when he had a heart attack in 2015 at the Capitol, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported early Saturday.

"What are we going to do without Doc?" Courtney asked. "He was always there to take care of us and all Oregon."

"Along with his family, we are stunned and sad."

Before joining the Legislature, Bates, a Vietnam War veteran, served 10 years on the Eagle Point School Board and two years on the governor's task force on quality education. As a member of the state's Health Services Commission for several years, he was instrumental in the formation of the Oregon Health Plan.

The Senate Democrats Office praised Bates for his policy and leadership on health care, education, the environment and the state's budget and bringing opposing sides together.

In a statement released Saturday morning, Brown indicated she plans to order flags lowered in honor of the long-time statesman. "Alan was a close friend, a statesman, and a doctor who was deeply committed to ensuring that every Oregonian had access to health care," Brown said. "He left an indelible impression on Oregon, and I will miss him forever."

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, who served with Bates during his five terms in the Oregon House, praised Bates as "a good man, a wonderful friend, and a powerful voice

in the Legislature." "It was a pleasure to serve with him," Merkley said. "His leadership and expertise will be deeply missed. Mary and I are holding his family in our hearts."

Oregon House Republican Leader Mike McLane and Medford Representative Sal Esquivel also remembered Bates as "a truly selfless public servant" and "a statesman."

"Our hearts are in mourning today as we grieve the loss of our friend," McLane said. "Sen. Bates was a man of enormous integrity and a truly selfless public servant. He touched the lives of thousands of Oregonians through his work as both a senator and family physician."

"On behalf of House Republicans, I extend the deepest condolences to Senator Bates' family and to his colleagues and friends in the Senate. He will be dearly missed by many."

"The sudden passing of Dr. Bates is a great loss for our community and the state of Oregon," Esquivel said. "He was always a statesman and it was an honor serving with a fellow Vietnam veteran and a gentleman."



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