

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

Senate Approves Own Version of Tax Relief

Eagle Newspapers
By Kathleen Glanville
Reporter

SALEM—After four hours of debate, the Senate passed its own version of tax relief last week, voting to pay 30 per cent of every homeowner's property tax bill and limit increases in property tax assessments.

The \$664 million plan must still win approval in a House-Senate conference committee and be signed by Gov. Vic Atiyeh.

Debate in the conference committee is likely to center on the Senate's limits on residential property tax assessments—something the House plan did not address—and income tax indexing which the Senate cut out of its plan.

The major part of the Senate plan, which passed 20-10 after three alternatives had been voted down, follows the basic thrust of the original House plan with a few key differences.

"There has never been a popular, easy way to enact tax policy," said Sen. John Powell, D-Halsey, chairman of the Senate Revenue and School Finance Committee which worked six weeks on the plan. "But you and I heard a resounding voice from the people that something has to be done about taxation," he said. "If (this plan) is passed, it will be done."

If the plan succeeds it will go into effect immediately, providing tax relief this year in an attempt to head-off initiative measures to bring a California-style tax limitation to Oregon.

The major provisions of the tax plan are the following:

The state will pay 30 per cent of every homeowner's tax bill up to \$800, beginning this November. Equivalent relief is provided renters.

Annual increases in property assessments will be tied to increases in the cost

of living. If the property is sold it would automatically be reassessed at fair market value.

Benefits under the Homeowner and Renter Relief Program (HARRP) will be involved by raising the maximum income level from \$16,000 to \$17,500.

A split ballot for local government budget elections which would separate existing spending programs from new programs to give voters more of a choice. The split ballot provision is aimed specifically at schools in the personal tax exemption from \$750 to \$1,000. After January 1981 the personal tax exemption would increase along with the Portland Consumer Price Index.

Powell said he believed the governor would be able to support the Senate's version of the tax plan.

Atiyeh almost threatened to veto the plan passed overwhelmingly by the House because it didn't limit local government spending or the rise of assessed property values.

Powell said those concerns were covered in the Senate plan.

But the day before the Senate voted on its plan Atiyeh held a press conference to throw his support behind an 11th hour plan proposed by Senate Minority Leader Bob Smith.

The plan, proposed as a minority report, concentrated on income tax relief and limiting tax rates.

It was defeated 20-10.

specifically at schools.

A one-time four per cent income tax rebate and an increase in the personal tax exemption from \$750 to \$1,000. After January 1981 the personal tax exemption would increase along with the Portland Consumer Price Index.

Picture Credit

Pioneer Memorial Hospital Auxiliary members review posters advertising the Open House at PMH this Friday. With her back to the camera is Betty Brown and seated across the table, l to r, Carley Drake, Martha King and Sandy Murray. The Auxiliary will be seeking new members during the Open House and free blood pressure and pulmonary screening clinics will be given. The reception—noting National Hospital Week—will be from 3-5 p.m. and refreshments will be served.



LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

No on hospital

Editor:

RE: PIONEER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BUDGET \$598,587.

Following information is pertinent and should be known to voters when voting:

1. Not true that a yes vote is necessary to KEEP our HOSPITAL. If hospital budget voted down three times—County Court obligated by law to keep hospital. County Court might need to ask for a supplemental budget if needed. To vote Hospital budget down does NOT mean loss of hospital. It could mean that we could have a more responsive board and management.

2. Items in budget that should be questioned is Boardman Clinic (\$157,140). Budget is for PIONEER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL not Morrow County health facilities. Boardman Clinic should be in County budget. Another item is \$70,000 for a management group. Since Board has stated they do not plan to go management group route, this item should not be included now. There are many other items that need study and some that I feel need to be added.

3. Last June at a public meeting attended by approximately 250 persons, Chairman Fred Martin promised those attending to appoint an advisory committee

representing medical persons, employees, and lay persons. Board has been reminded of this promise many times. No action to date. Now they have obligated themselves for \$500 per month for a management consultant to tell them they need to do this. No monies in last years budget to cover this \$500 per month. I believe this to be irresponsible if not illegal handling of public funds.

4. Many things in last years budget have not been done. Less than two thirds of "capital" monies expended per needs in last years budget as of March, 1979. These monies so budgeted and not used should still be on hand. Are they?

These and many, many more questions should be answered next Wednesday, May 16, at Budget hearing at the Courthouse. YOU COME and be an informed voter when YOU vote.

I want to state that Hospital Board is very earnestly trying to run our Hospital to the best of their ability. They are not asking the people whom use the hospital (Doctors, Nurses, Employees) for advice. When it is offered as Dr. Gifford did at last meeting, they did not listen. This is where I feel they are completely "missing the boat."

Jewel Hager
Heppner, Oregon

Hospital budget questioned

Editor:

Election time is just around the corner. I feel the public is entitled to know a few things about the hospital budget.

First of all, I want to say one thing. The hospital, to exist, must have doctors. These doctors must have some place to bring their patients, and we must bring the patients back into the area to the practicing physicians.

We just don't need a general practitioner. We need a surgeon, and the surgery dept. reopened. The grant does not provide for the needed facilities. The patients are the taxpayers and need to know where their money is going.

The budget that is coming up for the

taxpayer approval reflects several important things. The hospital board is asking us to guarantee physician salaries for both the hospital and the Boardman-Irrigon clinic. That totals \$100,000.

The grant came up \$60,000 short. They are asking the taxpayer for this amount to improve the emergency facilities at the hospital.

This study was decided upon after the budget was submitted for approval by the county budget committee.

Prior to this time, the hospital board asked for \$70,000 for a management plan. This money still remains in the budget and we the public are expected to approve.

The hospital board has also asked for

Reform Eyed for Injured Worker Care

A third-term Oregon Legislator is discovering how difficult it is to effectively reform a government program that has become institutionalized through longevity.

Rep. Jim Chrest (D-Portland) has introduced a bill in Salem that would extensively change the system by which Oregon administers care and compensation for injured workers.

The system is known as Workers' Compensation Insurance and along with tax relief, has become a top priority legislative target for a growing number of lawmakers.

The reason? Staggering increases in program cost.

Premiums for Workers' Compensation Insurance cost Oregon employers a paltry-by-comparison \$74 million in 1968. Premium totals had doubled by 1972, doubled again by 1976 and exceeded an astounding half-billion dollars in 1978!

The nearly 7½-fold increase (643 per cent) has earned Oregon the dubious distinction of being the highest Workers' Comp cost state in the nation. And when one considers those premiums are wholly paid by employers and become a cost of

doing business, it is easy to understand why the situation has achieved such high legislative priority. And this concern becomes even more apparent in view of the fact a legislative remedy appears the only method of controlling those rocketing costs.

Repeated studies have revealed Oregon's Workers' Comp costs are largely the result of liberal judicial interpretations of existing state law and the expense of medical treatment.

Successive sessions of the Assembly have addressed the problem but with minimal effectiveness. Costs continue to escalate.

With this situation uppermost in his mind, Rep. Chrest accepted chairmanship of the House of Representatives' Labor Committee fully committed to solving the problem. Armed with blue collar work experience, information gained as a labor union official and knowledge forged during two previous legislative sessions—one as a member of the Labor Committee—Chrest figured the best way to tackle the issue was as objectively as possible.

He employed an attorney with little previous knowledge of Workers' Comp but a reputation for an ability to conduct effective research. For nearly four months the researcher studied systems for compensating injured workers nationwide. Chrest and a legislative assistant met clandestinely and regularly to sift and sort and ultimately piece together a plan they hoped would achieve their goal.

It was revealed last week. Initial reaction was generally favorable. Particularly as far as the plan's concept was concerned.

Dubbed the Workers' Recovery Act, the Chrest bill proposes a philosophical change that would reward injured workers for trying to work instead of providing awards for not working.

It would force employers to re-employ injured workers for less demanding tasks if necessary and provide wage-loss benefits designed to maintain pre-injury compensation. It would reform the medical care process to establish treatment fees and recovery schedules. It would slash litigation by doing away with present awards and reduce the number of methods by which employers purchase insurance.

Employers now buy Workers' Comp insurance from private carriers, from the state or self-insure. Under the Chrest plan the private insurance companies would be eliminated.

He explained much of what he hopes would develop into a cost saving involves elimination of profit on the parts of those involved in the present system. This includes private carriers, attorneys representing workers who appeal benefit decisions and the medical profession.

Although hailed initially and conceptually, Chrest's bill is now undergoing the fine-toothed comb treatment that is the Legislature's prerogative. Bolstering intense examination by lawmakers themselves will be representatives of all concerned—employers and employees, business and labor interests, doctors, lawyers, insurance people and administrators of the current system.

And the current legislative session probably won't last long enough to hear all the arguments and alternative proposals.

Print juvenile delinquent names

From the
Milton-Freewater
Valley Herald

Juvenile. (Joo've-nill): 1. Young. 2. Relating to or suitable for youth.

That's how Mr. Webster defines it, but when most of us hear the word, we think of a kid in trouble with the law.

I've been thinking a lot about that lately...kids in trouble with the law.

Last week, city police caught three juveniles who are charged with inflicting about \$2,000 damage to nine vehicles. And for no apparent or real reason.

Special mention of this case was made at the City Council meeting two days later to ask them "to see what happens."

And we hear a lot of that lately, too...things are too easy for juvenile offenders in Umatilla County. The lax attitude toward juvenile offenders goes back a long way. "He's just a wild kid," some would say, "he'll straighten out on his 18th birthday." Now, things are different.

Juvenile criminal cases and the newspapers of Oregon have a peculiar relationship, too.

Let's get this straight. It is NOT against the law for a newspaper to print the name and age of a juvenile offender. It

is, however, against the law for police agencies to release the name and age of a juvenile offender. The only way this can be different is if the appropriate judge takes the appropriate action to release the kid's name and age to the press.

There is a movement in some states to repeal similar laws. We think they ought to be repealed in the case of felony crimes. Why do we keep the kid's name a secret, anyway? That, too, goes back a long way. When those laws were written, we had a "thing" about keeping the kid guarded, saving embarrassment to family and friends. It is my feeling that if a kid is big enough to commit the crime, he or she is big enough to read their name in the newspaper.

Such a move would also release important information as to how juvenile cases are handled. Now, the understanding is a very vague thing to the public.

Why am I hammering on juvenile offenders this week? I was fortunate to see the film, "Scared Straight," on teevee Sunday night. It made a lasting impression on me and I think everyone should see it.

I don't want to see any kid go to jail. Therefore, we need to take juvenile crimes out of a locked box, call for stricter punishment and more "Scared Straight" programs.

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Persons wanting information on bills, hearings, and other doings of the Oregon Legislature may call, toll-free, 1-800-452-0290

Remember the lawnmowers I mentioned in previous writings and how they sat out in the weather during winter. A new riding mower is asked for because the others must be replaced.

I feel the taxpayer should know what he is voting for and not just dollars and cents published because it has to be before an election can be held.

Merl Cantin
Heppner

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