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Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
 Oregon District 31



Over the last couple of weeks, I have been getting a lot of letters on several "hot button" issues, so I thought I would give you an update on those bills. The first one is HB 3543, the back-to-the-future "kicker" refund proposal that changes the way taxpayers will receive their refund, should they be entitled to one.

When income tax receipts exceed the state economist's projection by 2%, the entire amount gets kicked back to the taxpayer. In 2007 (the last time the kicker kicked), the refund amounted to \$1.1 billion, and although my mail is evenly split as to whether or not we should be "kicking" this money, that is not the reason for the bill. HB 3543 helps the state save significant taxpayer money by returning to the original kicker refund method.

Prior to 1995, taxpayers received their kicker refunds in the form of credits on their following year's taxes. In 1995, the Legislature changed that process to the issuance of kicker checks, usually in December. Although well received, this change did not come without a cost. In 2007, the price tag was about \$1 million to process the checks, and \$2.1 million to borrow the money in advance of receiving the tax receipts in April. Even with the best of intentions, this doesn't make any fiscal sense, hence the need for HB 3543. The bill has passed both the House and the Senate and moves on to the Governor for his signature.

Another bill that has generated a lot of interest is SB 695, which would ban Bisphenol-A (BPA) from children's drinking containers and reusable water bottles. BPA, an endocrine disrupting chemical, has been shown to leach into our bodies and, thereby, interfere with both male and female hormones causing, among other things, early puberty, breast and prostate cancer, low sperm count, diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

In a poll conducted just this month, 75% of Oregonians were found to support this legislation. The bill passed the Senate 20-9, in a bipartisan passage of the bill. It is now in the House Energy, Environment and Water Committee and it is running into trouble. Since the House is split 30/30, every committee has two chairpersons and both must agree on the progress of a bill assigned to it. Right now, there isn't agreement and some members are talking about introducing another bill and having it assigned to another committee. I will keep you posted...

Finally, many of you have written about HB 3145, the expansion of Oregon's iconic bottle bill. That bill passed the House 47-12 on May 4th, and on May 25th, it passed the Senate 19-11. The bill sets up a pilot redemption center and establishes convenience zones that would further facilitate the return of containers.

Some of you have written to object to the increased bottle deposit, from five cents to ten cents per bottle. I want to emphasize that an increase would occur only if the redemption rate falls below 80%, which has never happened. The new law does not take effect until January 1, 2018, so there is lots of time to fine-tune the redemption process. Literally scores of stakeholders worked on this bill, including beverage distributors, grocers, recyclers and consumer organizations. It now goes to the Governor for his signature.

Items of Interest...

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has announced that they are lowering the interest rate on their 30-year fixed-rate mortgage to 4.125%. This program is separate from the federal VA program, so a veteran may still be eligible for an ORVET home loan. Currently, the maximum loan amount is \$417,000 for a single family dwelling. For more information you may contact the Department at 1-888-673-8387, or <http://www.oregon.gov/ODVA/HOMELOANS/>.

Clatsop Community Action has been conducting legal clinics for the public over the last couple of months. There is one more scheduled for June 23rd at their conference room, 364 9th Street in Astoria. There is a walk-in advice clinic from 10:00 – 12:00; landlord and tenant law from 1:00 – 2:00; and appointments from 2:00 – 3:30. The Oregon Law Center is conducting the clinics, and you may call 503-325-1400 for more information.

Bills of Interest...

HB 2274 Permits certified peace officers from states adjoining Oregon to provide or attempt to provide law enforcement services within Oregon under certain conditions.

HB 2678 Increases dishonored check fee from \$25 to \$35.

HB 3126 Authorizes prosecution for failure to report as sex offender in county where defendant is apprehended or last registered, if county where offense was committed cannot be determined.

HB 2892 Allows landowners with common boundary that is uncertain or subject to dispute, to locate and fix boundary by agreement.

HB 3127 Authorizes parking of up to seven dump trucks and up to seven trailers on a lot or parcel of land zoned for forest use or mixed farm and forest use.

Letters

First Friday kick-off was a great event

To the Editor:

The First Friday of the Season, May 6th, was a success, thanks to the many vendors, volunteers and visitors that participated.

A variety of crafts, plants and local products were for sale, kids and adults made Mother's Day cards and the Scout Cabin was lively despite the rain outside. Because of the generosity of all, First Friday was able to cover costs and make a donation to Hands on Art in support of our community.

Thank you to the volunteers who set up, kept things running smoothly and cleaned up afterwards, especially Don Webb, who put up the Maypole just in case the sun decided to join in the fun.

**Kathy Larsen
 Vernonia First Friday
 Coordinator**

We need change, give new council a chance

To the Editor:

Dear Independent and people of Vernonia: I ran for the office of Mayor of Vernonia, a non-paying job, because I believed Vernonia needed changes. Our water bill is the highest in the state and our city workers are some of the best paid. The people of Vernonia earn less than people in the Portland metro area so cannot afford to pay almost double what people in Beaverton pay for basic services. I was glad to have new people on the City Council. I really can't see how they could run the city worse than the ones we voted out.

Please give the new councilors a chance.

With respect,

**Emil E. Rode
 Vernonia**

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters with personal attacks on private citizens. Preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

"It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our country is now geared to an arms economy which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear."

— General Douglas MacArthur, Speech, May 15, 1951

"If we fail to learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.".....Unknown