

Salem Scene

By Representative Deborah Boone
Oregon District 32



The Redistricting Compromise was released this week, and much to my disappointment, House District 32 still splits Tillamook County nearly in half. In fact, the latest plan calls for dividing the county at Highway 6, which effectively divides the city of Tillamook into two separate legislative districts. The process of redistricting is held every decade, after the population numbers are determined by the U.S. Census. Congressional, State Senate, and State House districts are redrawn so an equal number of voters are in each voting district. Each area must be contiguous, use existing geographic and political boundaries, while not dividing communities of

common interest, or diluting the voting strength of ethnic or language minorities.

I'm of the opinion that there has been compelling testimony offered regarding the fact that Tillamook County is a community of common interest. Whether we are talking about the agricultural matters relating to the dairy industry, utility provision, law enforcement, emergency management, the transportation district, or even the fact that most of the area south of the City of Tillamook is unincorporated and relies entirely on county services, this clearly seems to meet the definition of "community of common interest." The House and Senate Committees on Redistricting will be accepting testimony on this latest compromise plan, but as the lines are currently drawn, I will not be able to support the redistricting plan.

The Oregon Legislature conducts business through a committee process. Each piece of legislation is referred to committee where public hearings and work sessions are held. Many times proposed laws do not

get out of committee for consideration by the entire House. Sometimes a single lawmaker can decide that a bill will not move out of committee. This session a new procedure was introduced that allow bills to be withdrawn from committee and go to the House floor. A written petition is filed with the Chief Clerk, and then at least 31 signatures (a majority) must be gathered from house members within 5 calendar days in order to withdraw the bill from committee and bring it to the House floor for a vote. This week three of those so called "discharge petitions" were filed, relating to tuition equity, prevailing wages, and honoring former Governor Ted Kulongoski. None of these petitions received the necessary 31 signatures.

Oregon voters approved the implementation of annual legislative sessions in last November's General Election. Oregon law mandates that sessions in the odd numbered years be no longer than 160 days, and sessions in the even numbered years be limited to 35 days. This year's session must end no later than June

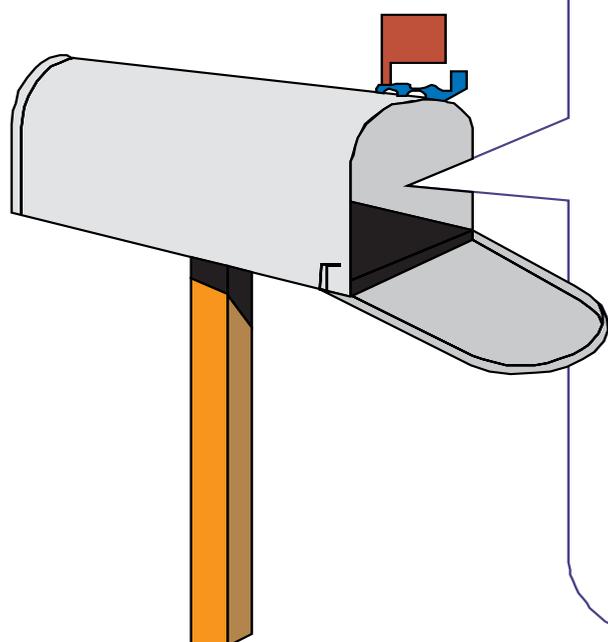
30. Most committees have finished their work, only the Ways and Means, Revenue, and House and Senate Rules committees are actively working on legislation for this session.

The main responsibility of the Legislative Assembly is to approve a balanced budget, and the Joint Ways and Means Committee members are continuing to put in long hours reviewing state agency budgets, and making difficult decisions about state spending levels. Right now as we near the final days of negotiation, Governor Kitzhaber has asked lawmakers to consider about a dozen policy bills as part of an Education Package. These bills include Education Service District Reform with an "Opt-Out" option for the NW Regional ESD, making the Governor the Superintendent of Public Instruction, overhauling online schools, making changes to charter school financing and authorization and setting up a Council to set goals for pre-kindergarten through associate degree education. There are also proposals to add more money for K-12 education, but there are still many agency budgets to approve, including the Oregon State Police, and Department of Corrections.

Work in the next several weeks will be interesting and intense as we near the end of the session.

As always, I invite you to call, write or email me with your questions and concerns, or if you need assistance with state agencies. Remember, if you are in Salem, stop by my office to say hello.

Thanks for reading, and for the privilege of representing you in the Oregon House of Representatives.



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