

Merkley explains no vote on the debt bill

On August 2, the United States Senate voted on legislation to increase the debt ceiling while imposing deep cuts on programs important to many middle class families. Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley voted against the bill. He issued the following statement:

"I have spent the last several days immersed in the details of this budget deal, trying to understand its real-world impact on Oregon's middle class and small businesses. I have a single, simple measure to evaluate this proposal: is it going to create greater opportunities for prosperity and success for working Americans? Unfortunately, I have concluded that it will not, and so I cannot support it.

"First, this deal will con-

tribute to the gathering storm threatening to make our current unemployment crisis even worse. Our unsustainable deficits are absolutely a long-term challenge that we must address. But millions of Oregonians and Americans are out of work right now. And with at least 5 million foreclosures looming, with the expiration of extended unemployment benefits forecast to cost half a million jobs next year, with the payroll tax holiday ending and costing another estimated 900,000 jobs in 2012, we should be relentlessly preoccupied with how to create more jobs. Instead, this package will add to the job losses, repeating the mistakes that have caused prolonged economic slumps in this country and elsewhere.

"Second, this deal will do serious damage to the programs that middle class Americans depend on. The bulk of the deficit reduction is piled onto that small part of the budget that funds things like Head Start, college financial aid, research into clean energy and medical cures, and safeguards against contaminated food and polluted air and water. These sorts of programs, combined, are less than one-fifth of the budget. And we are spending the same amount on them today in a real dollars, per person basis, as we did in 2001. Yet these programs – critical to helping families in tough times, to giving kids the tools they need to succeed, and to keeping our

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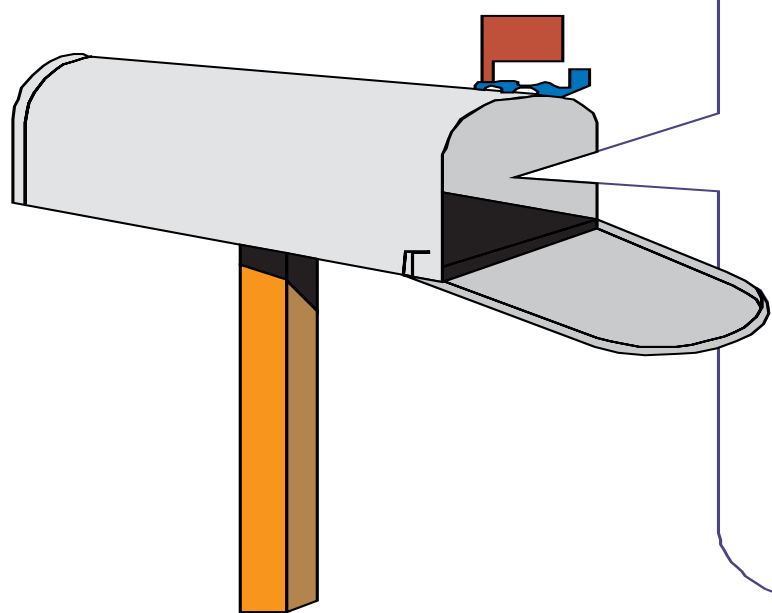
Governor signs Witt's bill to shut down shark fin market in Oregon

The Governor, on August 4, signed HB 2838, chiefly sponsored by Representative Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie), which outlaws the marketing of shark fins in Oregon. Shark fins are an expensive, in-demand item used in shark fin soup.

"All too often shark fins are obtained by means of a barbaric practice commonly referred to as finning. This involves the taking of sharks solely for the purpose of harvesting their fins, while the rest of the fish is usually wasted," said Rep. Witt. "Worse yet, sharks are often finned alive, only to die an agonizing death of starvation, drowning or bleeding."

Some estimates show that internationally approximately 73 million sharks are finned and killed each year. Oregon fisheries regulations conform to federal requirements prohibiting the removal of shark fins or tail at sea. However, there has been no Oregon law that bans the possession, sale, trade or distribution of shark fins in state. HB 2838 changes that.

In the wake of Oregon action on this issue, similar legislation is now being considered in California and Canada. Washington State and Hawaii have enacted similar laws.



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