



Salem Scene

by Jack Zimmerman

With the sound of sine die gavels still echoing faintly in Capitol corridors, preparations already have begun for the 59th biennial session of the State Legislature in Salem.

Although it won't convene until the morning of Monday Jan. 10, groundwork is being laid and two recent developments highlight preparations.

The first was announcement of interim committee assignments -- those special legislative panels that study problem areas between sessions and recommend legislation intended to provide solutions. The second is growing activity by potential candidates, who have their collective eye on a seat in the next Legislature.

There is a definite connection. Serving on interim committees happens to work much to the advantage of incumbents, providing them with a degree of visibility prior to 1976 elections. New candidates don't get this type of official exposure. But the interim activity of incumbents should also serve to make legislative hopefuls painfully aware of what lies ahead in the event they are elected to serve.

Any new candidate figuring all he has to do is spend four or five months in Salem during a regular session every two years to fulfill his legislative duty should reconsider his candidacy.

Oregon lawmakers spend closer to five or six months at regular sessions these days and nearly half of their time on legislative duties during interim periods. They become ombudsmen

for their constituents before, during and after regular sessions. Because no state agency wants to run afoul of a lawmaker, there is a marked tendency to comply with a Legislator's request for

action in behalf of a constituent. And even the tiniest favor makes an avid supporter of the constituent on the receiving end.

Of course, there are requests to speak before Chambers of Commerce, civic and fraternal organizations, invitations to attend social events and so on. These are difficult to avoid because they too provide between-session exposure and enhance chances of success at the polls.

And then there's always the possibility of having to attend a special session to

solve some emergency problem.

But interim committee activity is likely the most taxing on a lawmaker's time between sessions. During the current interim some 25 special panels of one type or another already have been announced. Every lawmaker has at least one assignment and many have several.

The Emergency Board, for example, meets monthly between sessions. These always are at least two-day meetings. Depending on the extent of investigatory business any interim panel tackles, members should count on at least two full days of work per month for each.

Right now there are eight regular legislative interim committees created during the 58th session. There are a

couple of Task Forces. There are six Statutory Committees and another nine Statutory Committees with legislative participation and some lay members.

Senate President and House Speaker have some official or ex-officio capacity on almost every committee and some Legislators serve on as many as eight or nine individual study panels.

Two things become obvious. First, there isn't really much time for an Oregon lawmaker to spend on a fulltime job or even with his family. And second, all this activity feeds on itself to produce more laws, more state-finance programs of one sort or another, a burgeoning bureaucracy to administer all of these government functions -- and

in the long run -- more taxes, licenses, fees and special charges to run the show.

Expenses of each succeeding Oregon Legislature grow apace with an expanding biennial budget. Costs for recent legislative sessions have run about one per cent of the General Fund budget. That would put the cost of the current Legislature somewhere near \$11 or 12 million.

And the more programs undertaken, the greater the pressure for annual sessions. Only the Governor can now call a special session of the Legislature but voters next year will again have an opportunity to change the Constitution to permit lawmakers to call themselves into session.

Critics say such a step likely would produce annual

sessions and the next step would be a continuous session -- operating like the U.S. Congress. And costs would zoom upward in a similar manner.

In 1954 Congress employed 4,500 people with a budget of \$42 million. In 1975 Congress employed 16,000 individuals and had a budget of \$328 million. That's a boost of 256 per cent in staff and 681 per cent in budget.

Ten years ago the President of the Oregon Senate employed two secretaries during the session and an administrative assistant for part of the session. When the session ended, he closed the office.

Today the offices of leadership of both Houses bustle with activity year-round. Special administrative,

legal, research and fiscal offices of the Legislature find their workload diminishes little during the interim.

The U.S. Senate recently passed a resolution authorizing each Senator to hire a maximum of three committee assistants at a salary not to exceed \$33,975. Oregon Senators and Representatives aren't authorized to be that spendy yet. But as their work increases the pressure for additional assistance will grow apace.

Where all this leads isn't guesswork. The trend toward more legislation creates more government. More government means more work for lawmakers and more pressure for fulltime, professional legislators, who can afford to spend all their time on the job.

Wattwise

Home Making Tips

By Helen Johnson

Summer Coolers

Beat the summer heat by trying to outsmart old man weather. You can vent heat, cook while it is cool, and use the right appliances.

Vent house heat out, kitchen appliances can add noticeably to air conditioning costs even on comfortable days. An easy to do system is a window fan with adjustable side panels to fit most windows. The through-the-wall type require expert installation; they also trap greasy fumes in washable filters.

If you must use your heat producing appliances, use them in the cool of the morning or evening, you'll have to plan your menus around foods that reheat well and won't spoil if held for a day or two in the refrigerator. Some ideas are macaroni or potatoes for salad; soup or chowder; oven-fried chicken. Of course, chill any foods as quickly as possible; leaving food at room temperature is always a risk and becomes a greater risk if the food will be held for any length of time.

Small appliances cook with out adding too much heat to the scene. Bring out your large electric griddle when the crowd is coming for lunch or supper for grilled sandwiches. Or move the cooking out doors -- it is always cooler and the food seems to always taste better. There is less cleanup as you'll probably use disposable plates and cups. You can bake potatoes or corn in foil, heat beans or other precooked vegetables besides cooking meats, poultry or fish.

When it comes time to have a dessert, instead of baking puddings, pie or cake; make a supply of freezer treats. Some examples: popular ice pops made in plastic molds from fruit juice. Or little paper cups filled with yogurt and fresh fruit.

If you have a slow-cooker, make use of it this summer. Cooking at the low temperature it won't need watching or heat up the kitchen. Cook a whole chicken in cream or evaporated milk; add celery, carrots and white onions. A meatball stew, using meatballs to replace beef chunks. Fish chowders with cream or milk added the last half hour is also a special slow-cooker treat. Don't forget to check the bookstores for the latest in crockery cookery. There are several on the market with recipes for desserts, too.

Simplify your cleanup by cutting down on the dishes you use. Serve your salad on the same plate as the main dish. Treat yourself to paper plates and cups occasionally, even for indoor meals. Line broiler pans, roasting pans, etc., with heavy duty foil to save on cleanup time. Cooking bags save on cleanup, too.

Take the day off by bringing home tasty "take-out" food for the easiest dinner of all. To keep food warm place it in an electric skillet, set at 200 deg. F. To keep it crisp leave food uncovered or wrap it loosely in foil.

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