



Senator Jeff Kruse

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E-Newsletter

Working Hard For You

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Today, barring some unforeseen event should be the last day of the 2013 Legislative Session. While it will probably be prudent to let some time pass before making a full assessment of what was or wasn't accomplished, there are a few things that can be commented on now.

The first would be the complete lack of openness in the process. Several years ago the Senate President created a new sub-committee in the Ways and Means process and named it the Capital Construction committee. Historically the Speaker and President have not been members of committees, although by rule the Senate President is a member of all Senate committees. Additionally, the Ways and Means co-chairs generally don't serve on any sub-committees. The membership of this new committee includes the President, Speaker and both co-chairs. In the type of one party system we currently have in Oregon this allows them to move whatever legislation they have collectively agreed to with very little input from the rest of the legislature.

This happened yesterday afternoon when this subcommittee met. They passed a series of bills with no discussion and no input from anyone, even committee members. To make it even worse they passed some of the bills with "conceptual amendments". What this means is the committee was told what the amendments were supposed to do but did not have the actual amendments in the required written form, which is a violation of our rules. These bills were sent to the Full Ways and Means Committee for action.

The full committee met about two hours later and didn't have the amended versions of the bills when the meeting started, although they did show up in the OLIS system about five minutes

after the meeting started. They were then asked to votes on measures they had clearly not had time to read or understand. At the meeting Senator Devlin, who is the Senate co-chair, stated this was the most open process they had ever had. His definition of openness is clearly different than mine.

Another interesting development yesterday was the passage of the tax credit bill. For the most part it was a good bill and I would have supported it. Unfortunately, they chose to put a couple of tax increases in the bill, which should require a super majority vote. We challenged the bill on that standard. The ruling by the President basically was it didn't meet the super majority standard because they were really just small tax increases. In a vote of the Senate the Democrats supported his ruling. I though we weren't supposed to pick and choose which laws we wanted to obey.

That was yesterday in a nutshell. Today all of these Measures will come up for a vote and we will be done. In the end we will have continued to expand state government at an unsustainable level, with many of the major state agencies growing by as much as 20%. What we haven't done is deal in any real way to impact the Unfunded Actuarial Liability in our PERS system. The combination of this action and inaction is going to create a financial crisis for our state in about four years the like of which we have never seen.

I want to thank all of you who have been reading my letters as I do appreciate your input. Clearly I am frustrated by some of the things we have done and probably even more frustrated by the things we haven't done. Being in the minority gives one the opportunity to occasionally stop some things, but also very little opportunity to actually move an agenda. At the beginning of this Session the Senate Republicans made it clear we wanted to focus on job growth. Initially everyone agreed to that principle. At the end of the day we have done a couple of things to help big business (mostly in Washington County), but nothing to help small business.

It is my intention to take a few weeks off from politics and focus on my farm. I will, however continue to check emails daily and will begin relatively soon to start preparing for February. Hopefully we can do better next time.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeff Kruse