

JEFF GOLDEN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 3



OREGON STATE SENATE

January 11, 2021

VOTE EXPLANATION ON APPROVAL OF SENATE RULES FOR 2021 SESSION

I voted in support of the Senate Rules for the 2021 session despite my agreement with the basic point made in opposition by numerous Republican Senators: closing the Capitol, the “people’s building,” to Oregon citizens, is inconsistent with our responsibility to maximize the transparency of government, and our citizens’ access to the governmental process. My judgment is that this legitimate and sincerely-argued concern is outweighed, *at this point in time*, by our responsibility to do everything we can to temper soaring Covid-19 infection rates in our state. All of the relevant metrics indicate that the pandemic’s toll has reached critically grave levels. Hospitals and other healthcare facilities in my district, like many across the state, verge on having their critical care capacity overwhelmed by new cases of the virus.

This is a matter of finding the soundest balance we can between two indispensable values that currently conflict. Because both *are* indispensable, **I believe that this decision should be reassessed on an ongoing basis**, with the express goal of opening the building to the public as soon as we responsibly can. My specific suggestion is that **Legislative Administration be charged with providing periodic updates to all members** that include

- 1) A summary of Covid infection trends over the preceding month
- 2) Any developing information that OHA may have regarding activities and practices that appear to either promote or reduce infection
- 3) Best practices in other State Capitols and comparable facilities for expanding access to the public
- 4) Any new ideas under development that could reduce transmission related to the presence of more people in the Capitol.

I suggest that a new update be released and distributed on every second Friday of this session beginning January 29, 2021. I am submitting this suggestion directly to Senate President Courtney, Senate Majority Leader Wagner, House Speaker Kotek and House Majority Leader Smith-Warner.

Respectfully,

Jeff Golden, Senate District 3
Chair, Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
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