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### **Gomberg Prepares for 2015 Session**

In January, the 2015 legislative session begins and I'll be driving to Salem each morning for six months. This is my second term representing the coast from Yachats to Tillamook as well as Sheridan and Falls City. It starts with some special opportunities for our remarkable district.

The Speaker has honored me with the responsibility of Co-Chairing the Joint Committee on Transportation and Economic Development. I will be a member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. I will be part of the Natural Resources budgeting committee. And I will join the Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water. Together these assignments provide a unique opportunity to advocate for our highways, bridges, and ports. I'll play a leading role in business, tourism, and economic growth. And I'll be able to help our schools, colleges, and universities.

These are not small assignments, and I look forward to working hard for our communities, our district, and our state.

What are the issues and challenges we're facing here at the beach with the start of a new session and budget cycle?

**Education:** The proposed budget has focused increases on early learning and full-day kindergarten. This is certainly important. But our local Superintendents tell me if left with this plan, they will have to make further cuts in our schools. We are already three weeks behind the national average in annual teaching days. Said another way, after 12 years, our kids are a full year behind those in "average" states. We have to do better. Rebuilding our education system for our kids and grandkids will be my first and highest priority.

**Colleges:** Anyone who has heard me speak knows I'm a great fan and supporter of our Community Colleges and Small Business Development Centers. But what we are finding is that smaller schools have higher per-student costs. And that means our coastal colleges have some of the highest tuition in the state. I'll be working to reduce tuition at rural colleges where we can focus results on improving rural economies.

**Small Business:** Like the farmers, fisherman, hotel owners, restaurateurs, retailers and entrepreneurs along the coast, I'm a small business owner. And I'm one of a handful of legislators who actually own a cash register. I'll continue to raise small business concerns and push small business issues. I've already drafted legislation to actually cut taxes for our smallest and growing companies.

**Employment:** We're looking at proposals to increase the minimum wage, provide sick leave, and even create mandatory retirement savings. These changes will help low-income Coastal workers. But they may also hurt fragile coastal employers. Consider that at \$10 per hour, you take home about \$1300 a month. If rent is \$700 and child care \$600, you

have nothing left for food, utilities, or other necessities. Basically, you can't afford to take a job! People working full time should not be living under the poverty line or on public assistance. But we need to address these issues in a way that doesn't cost jobs and allows small businesses to survive and grow as well.

**Jobs:** Our best opportunity on the Coast is the planned expansion of the Marine Studies program at Hatfield. That means 150 more well-paying jobs and 500 more students. It also means better support for the environment, fishing industry, and other ocean-related commerce. The proposal is on track and money for new buildings is in the proposed budget. My job is to keep it there.

**Clean Fuels:** Proposals to reduce carbon emissions may increase gasoline costs here. And we already have the most expensive fuel in the state! Everyone wants cleaner air. But I'm also concerned about the effect on lower income working families and fixed income retirees.

**Infrastructure:** Our aging highways and bridges put us at risk with a major seismic event looming in the future. Too many schools are still in the tsunami zone. We need to begin the work of upgrading our infrastructure now. In the short-term this will help us take our products to market, educate our kids, and bring customers here to visit. In the long term, it will help us recover more quickly when the earthquake comes.

What this all means is that we'll face some hard choices in the coming Session. As these issues change and evolve, I hope you'll take time to write and let me know your thoughts. Tell me how the decisions I face will affect you and your family. These are challenging times. It will take all of us working together to put Oregon back on the path to economic prosperity. I am committed to listening to YOU and to working for YOU.

As always, it is an honor to represent you and this wonderful district.

David Gomberg represents the 10th House District. To receive regular legislative updates, go to <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/gomberg>.



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