



State Representative **Mitch Greenlick**

The MitchMessage

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The first month of the 2015 legislative session has zoomed by. The distractions provided by the Kitzhaber drama move into background (except on the front page of the Oregonian) and the frantic business as usual atmosphere has settled in. The committees have begun to produce perfected bills, moving them to the House floor for action.

One of my early tasks this session was to serve as the House chair of the Joint Committee on Health Insurance Transition. This committee, which first began its work during December, was charged with determining the fate of Cover Oregon, our version of the health insurance exchange formed during earlier legislative sessions. As you probably know, Cover Oregon had significant difficulties delivering the complex IT system designed to enroll people in either private health insurance or in the Oregon Health Plan.

Despite paying software giant Oracle \$190 million to create the system, it never became operational. A hybrid system was crafted that eventually enrolled about 80,000 people in private health insurance in the exchange and 225,000 into the Oregon Health Plan, of the 350,000 people added to OHP as a part of the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. Cover Oregon eventually decided to use the Federal Exchange's IT system for the 2015 open enrollment and has currently 100,000 enrolled in plans in the Oregon Exchange.

But the legislature had lost confidence in the independent public corporation running the exchange and the committee was charged with bringing the health insurance exchange into state government where we could have some semblance of control over its activities. The committee worked very quickly and crafted SB 1 which, when enacted, will abolish the public corporation and move the health insurance exchange function into the Department of Consumer and Business Services. DCBS is the home of the Oregon Insurance Division, which regulates the health insurance market and has several related functions.

The bipartisan, bicameral committee approved the bill, which next went to the Senate for action. The Senate passed the bill 20-10. I carried the bill on the floor of the House on Friday, where it passed 42-14, with a minimum of debate. We are assured Governor Brown will sign it.

While all of this was going on the regular business of the House was moving rapidly forward. I have been scheduling four to five bills for hearing or votes in each meeting of the Health Care Committee. We are hearing about the same number of bills in each of the four weekly meetings of the Judiciary Committee, of which I am a member. And next week we begin daily floor sessions and daily caucus meetings. That makes for scheduling problems for Harriet, because generally speaking there is at least one group of lobbyists or advocates who believes they need to talk to me about every bill in my committee and most bills in the Judiciary Committee. It is getting increasingly difficult to find time in the schedule for everybody who believes they must talk to me. And I am determined to make certain that everyone who wants to see me gets at least a few minutes.

Among the interesting bills that passed the House since last I wrote was HB 2177, the bill that provided for automatic registration of voters when citizens applied for a new driver's license or for a renewal. Since we changed the statute to require strict certification of citizenship and residence to qualify for a driver's license, people who qualify for a license are also qualified to vote. This bill provides for a transfer of information from DMV to the Secretary of State to allow for the addition of these citizens to the registration roles. There was a great deal of debate on this one, mostly with Democrats supporting the bill and Republicans in opposition.

I carried HB 2549 on the floor as well. That bill came out of a complaint from a constituent. My constituent had served as the executor of her mother's estate. Long after the estate was closed she received a claim that her mother had received a modest overpayment a decade before and needed to repay the "debt." The constituent informed the agency that her mother was dead and the estate was long closed. The agency turned the debt over to the Department of Revenue. They tried to collect and were also told the estate was closed. DOR turned the debt over to a collection agency. After hearing about the situation I checked in with DOR and was told they were required by statute to turn it over to a collection agency.

The bill, which passed without a no vote, provided that if DOR knew the estate of subject was closed they were not required to turn the claim over to a collection agency. It took about a ten-word amendment to that statute to solve the problem. This bill is one of four that I have introduced this session that came about because of a constituent's complaint.

As usual the email traffic has begun to grow and we are attempting to keep up with our responses. I do try to respond to all mail from constituents. I am less likely to respond to mass email from outside my district, on such issues as expanding background checks for gun sales. For my constituents I urge you to keep in touch on matters that concern you. Even though I might not always agree with you, I do really take your concerns seriously.

Mitch