



State Representative **Mitch Greenlick**

The MitchMessage

April 6, 2015

My next two town halls will be on April 25. The first will be held at 11 am Saturday at Friendly House, NW. 26th and NW Thurman. The second one will be at 2 pm that same day (with Rep. Ken Helm) at the St. Vincent Hospital Souther Auditorium in the East Pavilion.

The big news since the last *MitchMessage* was the House action passing the K-12 education budget at a \$7.255 billion level. The Beaverton school board orchestrated an amazing email campaign urging that we provide a minimum budget of \$7.5 billion. I received a wonderful set of emails from parents and teachers urging more money for schools. I definitely agreed with the sentiment of those emails. We need more money for schools and we need to be prepared to raise the revenue to pay for that support for schools. But failing the availability of more revenue here is why I supported the budget we passed.

First, I believe this budget provides a guaranteed floor on school funding, and its early passage gives our school districts an opportunity for rational planning for the next school year. Secondly, in the event the May forecast provides an increase in revenue from the March forecast, we have guaranteed that 40% of the increase will be added to the K-12 budget, even if that same forecast causes the “kicker” to kick.

Here are some facts about the \$7.255 billion budget. Statewide it represents a 25% increase from the 2011-2013 budget, as we had already added \$1 billion extra money since then. It is a \$600 million increase from the 2013-2015 budget, an increase of 9%. Of the \$600 million, \$220 million is to support the extra expense of full day kindergarten.

Since my Beaverton school district constituents were particularly concerned, I have gathered some data from the Legislative Revenue Office, comparing finances for the Beaverton district over the years. In the 2013-14 school year the Beaverton district received \$311,429,929 or \$6875 per student (ADM). By the current school year that had risen to \$331,920,882 and \$7248. With the budget we passed those numbers rise to \$355,795,601 and \$7360 for next year and \$361,401,380 and \$7476 for the second year of the biennium. While that does not put the district into fat city, it does not seem like a disaster either. And we hope with the improved economy we will have extra money to invest in schools.

Incidentally the debate over the budget bill was an interesting one for me as it caused me to think about the school debate over my seven terms in the House. I particularly focused on the difference between being in the minority and in the majority, as I have experienced both. When you are in the majority you have the responsibility of actually crafting a budget. When you are in the minority you can simply take the position that the budget is inadequate and those terrible people in the majority just plain hate kids. The only calm K-12 budget debate in my seven sessions came in 2011 when the House was split 30-30 and everybody shared the responsibility of crafting a budget. We created a bipartisan budget that session. The numbers probably would have been the same had there not been a power-sharing situation, but the debate certainly would have been different.

My legislative agenda is moving forward, as we have five bills out of House committees, two of which (HB 2549 and HB 2560) passed out of the House and are awaiting action in a Senate committee. HB 2549

is a constituent bill that restricts the state from trying to collect funds from an already closed estate and HB 2560 is a bill designed to increase the rate of colorectal screening in Oregon.

Three of my bills are awaiting action on the House floor, probably next week. HB 2557 is a bill that allows a person who has been found “guilty except for insanity” to seek their record be expunged in the same way a person convicted of the same crime can seek expungement. HB 2561 asks the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) to develop an oversight process for assuring state university compliance with the Rooney Rule that we passed in a prior session. It requires a university to interview at least one minority candidate when hiring a head coach or athletic director. And HB 3335, one of my favorite bills, asks the Higher Education Coordinating Council to deal with an important university issue. When students enroll in a community college and finish a two-year program, they are awarded an Associate of Arts degree. If a student enrolls in a university and completes the same classes during the first two years, but drops out before getting a degree, he or she is a college dropout. The bill asks the HECC to create some form of university recognition that can be granted that is similar to the AA degree.

We always have interesting bills on the floor to debate. SB 611 was one of those bills, a highly technical bill. I had received several email messages urging me to fight giving a tax-break to Comcast. It took me a while to find out what bill was going to give Comcast a “tax-break.” And the bill was SB 611, which was triggered by, among other things, a court case involving Comcast and the principle of something called Central Assessment. That relates to property tax assessments of things like the value of the Comcast personal property. In one model, the value of their cable is assessed for their total property tax bill. But that is clearly not the true value of the company’s property. Central assessment determines the tax bill based on some share of the company’s total value. Comcast had been paying about \$5 million a year until they were taken to court to claim central assessment. The court decision suggested they would owe about \$30 million a year. This bill, which dealt with other matters as well, would settle the issue and would bring Comcast’s tax bill to about \$24 million. I supported the bill because it did several other good things and because it did not feel like a “tax-break” to me.

I was also intrigued by our floor session last Thursday. We had 16 bills on the floor of the House Thursday. After having days where we spent the whole long session on long-winded debate on a single bill, we moved from verbose to terse mode. The Speaker told the two caucuses that if we cleared the agenda that day, the Friday session would be canceled. We zoomed through the 16 bills in near record time, since there was basically no opposition to any of them. But sometimes even non-controversial bills get discussion. Not Thursday.

I continue to value your email to me. So please don’t hesitate to keep the email coming. And join me at one of the scheduled town halls.

Mitch