



State Representative **Mitch Greenlick**

The MitchMessage

June 14, 2015

I reported in my last message that we are nearing the end of the session. That feeling has heightened as our pace quickens and we roll through consideration of a flood of bills coming to the floor. While the policy committees have shut down, we are getting bills back for reconsideration that were amended in the Senate. And the Joint Committee on Ways and Means has begun to pump out budget bills and some policy bills sent to them because they require budget appropriations.

When the House passes a bill and sends it to the Senate the Senate has three options. They can kill the bill without action, they can amend the bill or they can pass it in the form in which it passed the House. If the Senate passes it in the original form it goes directly to the Governor's desk for her signature. If the Senate amends the bill it comes back to the House for reconsideration. The House now has three options. It can kill the bill by not taking action, it can vote to concur and re-pass the bill in the amended version. Or the House can refuse to concur, in which case a conference committee will be named to work out the differences between the two versions. Most of the bills that come back for concurrence sail through without debate, but I had the opportunity to move not to concur on HB 3464, a bill out of my committee intended to improve access to dental care for pregnant, low-income women. It was the feeling of my committee members that the Senate had amended out the most important part of the bill. So we voted not to concur with the Senate amendments. We will see what happens in conference committee.

The work of the Ways and Means Committee has ramped up and agency budget bills are coming to the floor. People tend to think of the budget as one single giant bill, but in fact it actually comes in the form of dozens of individual bills. For example, each state agency, including each board and commission, has one or two individual bills comprising its budget. One bill will provide the agency's actual budget number and another will approve any fee increases for that agency. These generally, but not always, pass without much debate, although several Republican members vote against any fee increase. As the Committee begins to complete its budget work it has begun work on the scores of policy bills it has waiting for action.

Two of my important bills were heard this week in Ways and Means sub-committees. HB 3100, my most important bill that proposes the modernization of public health, moved unanimously out of the Ways and Means Human Services Sub-

committee for consideration by the full committee. Another of my bills, HB 3335, which would facilitate the ability of Oregon universities to issue certificates similar to the Associate of Arts degrees awarded by community colleges, received very favorable comments in the Sub-committee on Education. I have been assured it will soon be moving to the full committee.

We passed several important bills out of the House during the last two weeks. Perhaps the most important, SB 454, passed out of the House Friday. The bill provides that companies with more than ten employees must provide up to 40 hours of paid sick time per year for their employees. Both the House and the Senate committees have been working on this bill since the beginning of session. The final bill was improved by many compromises. Forty amendments to the bill were considered during the deliberations, but in the end it failed to achieve bipartisan support. SB 454 passed on a largely partisan 33-24 vote after three hours of heated debate. Two Democrats joined all of the present Republicans voting against the bill. There was some promise on the part of the leadership to come back in the 2016 short session and modify the program to moderate possible adverse effects on agriculture. I strongly support the measure because I believe, from a public health perspective, that we should do everything possible to avoid sick people coming to work and possibly sparking an epidemic. I was shocked to learn that the central bank of South Korea had to take steps to support the country's economy that was being devastated by the MERS epidemic. Fortunately we have not been faced with that kind of an epidemic yet.

Another important bill we passed was HB 2879, which created a way for pharmacists to prescribe and dispense oral contraceptives. Rep. Knute Buehler (R-Bend) proposed this bill, which was designed to increase access to effective birth control. Rep. Buehler is a physician on the Health Care Committee. The bill quickly gained bipartisan support and passed the House on a 50-10 vote. The bill is currently awaiting action in the Senate Rules Committee.

We passed an important gun bill last week, with strong bipartisan support. SB 525 will bring Oregon law in line with the Federal Violence Against Women Act. The bill, which passed 51-8, prohibits gun possession by domestic abusers who are subject to a restraining order or have been convicted of domestic violence crimes. It had broad community support and no formal opposition.

And we passed the first of a set of ethics bills proposed by Governor Brown. HB 2020 passed 58-1. The measure clarified the role and responsibilities of the spouse or domestic partner of the Governor, the States' First Partner. It clarifies that the First Partner and key Governor's advisors must fill out Statement of Economic Interest forms and specifies that all statewide elected officials are barred from receiving speaking fees while in office.

Not everything we do on the floor of the House is quite so serious as occasionally the members break the tension of a serious floor session with the opportunity of teasing one of the members carrying a bill. The debate on SB 298, a bill changing the regulations of massage therapy, provided just such an occasion. The bill's description

included the phrase “high velocity, short amplitude, manipulative thrusting procedures.” Some of our member wags could not resist questioning the carrier, Rep. Brian Clem, about the concept evoked by that phrase. He was not surprised by the ribald banter and handled the exchanges with the dignity they deserved.

I expect the next MitchMessage will be the end of session edition, but one never knows. I am guessing we will be out before the 4th of July, but legally we can stay in session through July 11. Remember I continue to be easily reached via email if you want to let me know what you are thinking about a bill we are considering.

Mitch