



State Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer



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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2016 Legislative Session begins tomorrow! Since it is the second year of our biennium, we have just 35 days to consider many issues. Here is an outline of topics in this newsletter:

- 1) [Summary of the short session](#)
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1) **Summary of the short session**

The main purpose of a short session is to review the state budget and make any necessary adjustments. In addition, each legislator may introduce two personal bills and each committee may introduce three committee bills. Typically, we consider bills that:

- almost passed last year but needed more time to work in the interim (IZ; minimum wage)
- tweak bills recently passed that had an unintended loophole (gun background check)
- deal with emerging crises (housing)
- are on our agenda now as alternatives to ballot measures (Renew Oregon's environmental measures; minimum wage)

We have several major bills that fit into one of those categories; so with preparing for all the issues on our agenda, I feel like I've just completed a short session before we've even begun! I'm attaching a [list of bills](#) to this newsletter that I will update weekly during the session. I encourage you to read the bill summaries, click the

online links to the bills, and submit written testimony if you cannot testify in person on legislation of concern to you.

2) Housing

As chair of the House Human Services and Housing Committee, my highest priority this session is housing. Over the last several months I have heard from countless individuals and organizations around the state that the lack of affordable housing is one of the greatest (and most rapidly increasing) barriers to health and prosperity for Oregonians.

While this need has been growing for decades, due in part to the growing wage gap and the federal decrease in housing funds since the early '80s, the recent recession (and in some areas, the emerging "sharing economies" for short term rentals like Air BnB) accelerated the growing gap between housing supply and demand.

Housing is now one of the top concerns in community health needs assessments conducted by hospitals, CCOs, and county health workers. The rate of toxic stress due to housing instability is enormous. Tenants paying higher rent often lower the thermostat to save money, resulting in mold and missed school/work days due to asthma; yet they often don't report it out of fear of receiving a no-cause termination or rent increase.

Schools are concerned about the impact on academic performance when an increasing number of students leave mid-year due to displacement - or must travel farther to remain in the same school. Business and government employees are having a harder time finding workforce housing. Congestion is increasing as families who are pushed out to cheaper areas must travel farther to jobs, schools, and services.

After hearing these stories over the last few months and watching Portland and Eugene declare states of housing emergency in October, housing became the primary topic of my [November](#) and [January](#) interim committee hearings.

On January 9th, Rep. Rob Nosse and I co-hosted an [Emergency Housing Legislative Forum](#), organized by many community groups who are on the front lines of this crisis. Fifteen legislators heard testimony from 27



Rep. Nosse and I introducing the panelists

tenants and increase our stock of affordable housing. This could not wait until the 2017 session.



Compelling testimony at the Emergency Housing Legislative Forum

Thus, I have been meeting with affordable housing groups, tenants, landlords, and legislative colleagues - most importantly, Speaker Tina Kotek, who has been an affordable housing champion for years, as well as my own senator, Michael Dembrow - over the last few months to discuss a package of bills (see [list of bills](#)) to address the housing crisis. We are also seeking \$10 million for Emergency Housing Assistance and the State Homeless Assistance Program, and \$17.5 million to preserve affordable housing at risk of converting to market rate when the federal subsidy grants expire.

My [first hearing](#) is tomorrow at 3pm!

3) Increasing income (minimum wage, wage theft, EITC)

Stagnant wages for many Oregonians are not keeping up with rising costs. Over the last few sessions, I have focused on expanding access to affordable health care, child care support, higher ed tuition relief, and tax credits to help vulnerable populations. This session, I fully support an increase in our minimum wage, increased regulation over wage theft, and an increase in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).

Besides helping lift people out of poverty, raising the minimum wage stimulates the local economy. Many studies have shown that lower income earners spend a far

greater percent of their resources locally, which helps create rather than reduce jobs. With several ballot initiatives to increase the minimum wage, I support the Governor's compromise to increase the minimum wage while providing a longer "glide path" for businesses, nonprofits, and the public sector to plan for that increase. Her plan includes a higher wage for the Portland metro area, given our higher living costs.

While Gov. Brown's compromise is more gradual than the minimum wage increase proposed in the ballot measures, it should be complemented by two EITC bills I am introducing with Rep. Jeff Reardon. HB 4110 increases the state EITC for low income families, and HB 4144 aims to increase our utilization of EITC and child care tax credits. A recent [OCCP study](#) showed that Oregon is dead last in its percent of eligible EITC recipients who claim the federal and state EITC. We are leaving approximately \$124 million federal dollars per year in Washington DC on that credit alone. Those dollars should be in the pockets of Oregonians who earned them!

4) Climate Change

With growing evidence of the dramatic climate impacts caused by carbon pollution - and recent bold "climate action" steps taken by the global community and our own city of Portland - I strongly support our state taking immediate steps to invest in renewable energy and conservation. In addition to curbing our carbon pollution, this will have positive health impacts, diversify and build our local economy, and reduce our dependence on out-of-state oil and coal.

HB 4036 "Coal to Clean" would replace a [Renew Oregon](#) ballot initiative in a compromise between environmentalists and Oregon's investor-owned utilities. It would move Oregon off of coal power by 2030, double the renewable energy standard to 50% by 2040, and put Oregon's electricity sector on track to meet our greenhouse gas reduction goals: reducing carbon emissions 75% below 1990 levels by 2050.

SB 1574 "Healthy Climate" would set up a process for a "Cap and Invest" program like the one California has implemented for years. Funds from carbon polluters would be invested in renewable energy, with an allocation directed at low-income communities, who tend to suffer disproportionately from pollution. They could also potentially lose jobs unless we re-invest "green economy" dollars into them.

5) Other hot topics

See my list of bills for Sen. Gelser's SB 1515 to hold the therapeutic foster care system more accountable, Rep. Williamson's HB 4147 to tighten the gun background check legislation we passed last year, HB 4017 (Basic Health Plan) and HB 4071 (COFA) to provide better health insurance for low income populations, and many other bills that can make a big improvement in the lives of Oregonians. Stay tuned through my weekly eNewsletters and my daily updates on [my Facebook page](#) for updates on bills, as it will all be fast and furious!

6) My new team

To help me advance legislation and communicate with constituents, I am fortunate to have Jen Corbridge continue as my first legislative aide. Since we are given one additional staff during session, I am delighted to have Emily Langston, who served as a PSU intern last year, come on board as my second legislative aide.

We will sorely miss Sonya Essaadi, our intern who was planning on volunteering with us for a third year but who sadly passed away last month. However we welcome three fabulous new interns: Sammie Saucedo, Michaela Gradstein, and Erika Hoover. I hope you get to meet all of my staff in Salem, or at one of my upcoming in-district events!



Team AKG (left to right): Sammie, Emily, Alissa,
Michaela, Erika and Jen.

7) Upcoming town halls and constituent coffees

Constituent Coffee
Sunday, February 7th 3:30-5:00pm
Mocha Express
1951 SE 82nd Ave

Constituent Coffee
Saturday, February 20th 10:00-11:30am
Northstar Clubhouse
5600 NE Glisan St

Post Session Town Hall
Co-hosted by Sen. Dembrow and Rep. Smith Warner
Wednesday, March 9th 7:00-8:30pm
Place-TBA

As always, I'm eager to hear your feedback!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alissa".

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