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Knopp tackles housing crisis, economic growth

SALEM, Ore.-Today, Senate Republican Deputy Leader Tim Knopp's package of bills to tackle the state's housing crisis, driven by a lack of supply and high demand received public hearings.

Senate Bill 608 allows local governments to expand the Urban Growth Boundary when the number of new households in a jurisdiction exceed the number of new housing units and vacancy rates drop below six percent.

"Oregon's soaring rent prices and housing shortages are caused by an outdated government that restricts building new places to live," said Knopp, of Bend. "Rents are rising faster than incomes, and we have to do something about it that restores the balance of supply and demand. When we do that, we will change lives in Oregon."

Senate Bill 612 authorizes local governments with sustained high unemployment, population decline or high poverty to waive state land use regulations for projects that create five or more new high-wage, full-time jobs. The bill allows the local governments to fast-track projects and establish a better tax base that will aid in funding critical services like public safety.

"Oregon's flawed approach to restricting economic development leaves struggling Oregonians behind," said Knopp. "The unemployment levels in many areas of the state are double the unemployment rates in places like Portland. We have to collectively tackle these tough issues and do better for the whole state."

Senate Bill 602 would authorize a local government to waive the requirements of any land use goals as necessary to establish and maintain a five-year supply of shovel-ready buildable lands for industrial and commercial uses.

"One of the Oregon Business Plan's identified needs is to move beyond archaic land use law, and require jurisdictions to maintain a supply of developable land. While jurisdictions have vacant industrial land available, many of the sites are not ready for development. We need to ensure we can attract business and be ready for expansion to keep businesses in Oregon," added Knopp.

Senate Bill 618 would temporarily authorize a local government to waive a statewide land use planning goal without taking an exception if the local government declares a land use emergency and takes an action that cannot comply with the requirements of the goal.

Due to housing shortages, rents throughout Oregon are rising faster than income levels, which is hurting many low- and middle-income families. For example, according to Zillow valuations the average rent prices in Bend are \$355/month higher than the national average; in Gresham, they are \$342/month higher; in Portland, they are \$479/month higher.

"We have had less new construction in the past decade than needed to provide supply relative to the growing population. The supply and demand chain are what impacts Oregon's housing affordability," concluded Knopp.

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