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Republican Lawmakers Denounce Hostage-Taking Of Vital Human Service Tax Credits

Senate Bill 925-A Undoes The Work Of Eight Different Legislative Committees

Salem, OR – Representative Knute Buehler (R-Bend), Representative Mark Johnson (R-Hood River), and Representative Julie Parrish (R-Tualatin/West Linn) today called on House and Senate Democrats to separate important tax credits for critical human services from bills that increase new taxes.

Senate Bill 925-A was voted out of the House Revenue Committee today by Democrats on a party-line vote. The omnibus bill seeks to combine the extension of popular tax credits that help working families, people with disabilities, and veterans. The bill then couples those tax credits with tax increases and other tax credits unrelated to serving Oregon's neediest families.

"Taking twelve tax credit bills, some of which have nothing to do with one another, and mashing them together into one bill so that legislators are forced to vote for something they don't support in order to vote for something they care about is simply not good public policy or in the public's best interest," explained Rep. Parrish. "Each of those bills, and any bills that increase taxes, should get an up or down vote on the House and Senate floor."

As a freshman legislator on the House Committee on Human Services, Rep. Buehler spent a significant part of his session working with Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer (D-Portland) to streamline tax credits to working families and individuals with disabilities. Several bills he worked on are now caught up in this omnibus bill.

"Good work was done by Chair Keny-Guyer, myself and others to improve and expand support for low-income working parents so more resources were devoted to families with kids and disabled family members. Now all this is at risk, needlessly," said Rep. Buehler.

Representative Johnson, a member of the House Revenue Committee didn't support the bill out of committee.

"I'm disappointed to see my Democratic colleagues use a questionable legislative tactic to hold some very important tax credits hostage," Rep. Johnson stated. "This is another legislative scheme that positions the most vulnerable Oregonians as leverage to justify a tax hike. We have the largest general fund in Oregon's history, and apparently, it's still not enough money for the legislature."

Rep. Johnson questioned the intent of the Ways and Means Co-Chairs at the beginning of the session when they charged the Joint Tax Credit Committee to arbitrarily decide there were funds for only \$14 million in tax credits this biennium.

“Rather than hold state agencies accountable for misspent tax dollars, the Co-Chairs have politically positioned important tax credits for working families,” said Rep. Johnson. “We should be working to make sure every dollar gets to the people first.”

If passed by the House, SB 925-A will have to go back to the Senate for concurrence. “I hope that Senate Democrats see this in the same light we do and not concur with the House,” said Rep. Parrish. “We still have time to get this right for Oregonians, and give them the tax credits they need so they can work, take care of a disabled family member, or access rural healthcare providers.”

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