



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Bills increase government efficiency with session timing adjustments

Senate bills adjust long session start date, require annual organizational days

SALEM – Oregon Senate Democrats took action to improve government efficiency last week by passing a pair of bills intended to maximize the impact of the time spent by legislators and staff in proposing, crafting and passing laws during legislative sessions.

Senate Bills 1562 and 1570 – both of which passed on the Senate floor late last week – modify the timing of the odd-year sessions and add an organizational day to the beginning of the even-year “short” sessions.

In the even-numbered years there currently is no required organizational day in advance of the shorter 35-day sessions. SB 1570 will require these organizational days to occur before all sessions. During the organizational days, legislators participate in mandatory trainings and adopt chamber rules. Additionally, measures filed prior to the session’s start date are introduced and referred to committees.

Having an organizational day before the even-year sessions allows the legislature to operate more efficiently by having housekeeping actions already addressed prior to the first official day of a session. It also allows the public to receive sufficient advance notice of legislative committee meetings that will occur during the first week of the session.

Currently, on odd-numbered years the legislature convenes for installation of new members and organizational days on the second Monday of January prior to the session. In accordance with current statute, the 160-day session then kicks off on the first day of February. SB 1562

permits the Legislative Assembly to commence the odd-year regular session in January, upon completion of the organizational days, rather than waiting until February.

This allows the legislature to begin working sooner and end the session earlier. With the current Feb. 1 start date, the Legislature often works into July, leaving government agencies with uncertainty about their budgets at the beginning of the new biennium. Working beyond Independence Day is also a detriment to Oregonians who would like to provide input on various bills but may have vacations and family activities scheduled that time of year.

“These bills work in tandem to maximize the effectiveness of the time we all spend in session developing policy and crafting thoughtful budgets,” said Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Beaverton), who carried the bills on the Senate floor. “It improves transparency for Oregonians who would like to travel to Salem – sometimes from the far reaches of the state, several hours away – to testify or give input on a variety of issues important to them. These bills help us get the maximum benefit from our schedule by giving us a running start into the session after our organizational meetings.”

The bills now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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