



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

February 25, 2016

CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@state.or.us

Senate votes to help Oregonians obtain loans for septic repairs

SB 1563 aims to improve public health and address environmental impacts

SALEM – The Oregon Senate today passed a bill to benefit the environment and help low-income families, often in rural areas.

Senate Bill 1563 – which passed 29-0 on the Senate floor today – requires the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to award grants for development and administration of low-interest loan programs for repairing, upgrading or evaluating residential or small business on-site septic systems.

“This is an incredibly important bill for the rural communities in my district and for the entire state. There is significant need in coastal communities, where failing septic systems are contaminating the environment and threatening public health,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay), who sponsored the bill. “Many of my colleagues across the state can share similar stories and similar challenges. Working class folks who have failing septic systems will benefit from accessing an affordable financing program to help them replace this critical infrastructure.”

The bill appropriates \$250,000 to DEQ to administer the program and award grants throughout the 2015-17 biennium. Grant recipients must meet certain criteria and are subject to DEQ oversight.

Septic systems are the most common method of sewage treatment for homes and businesses that are not connected to an area-wide sewage system. More than 30 percent of Oregonians rely on septic systems to treat wastewater from their homes and businesses.

Properly functioning septic systems treat sewage to minimize groundwater and surface water pollution. Septic systems which fail or malfunction can pollute Oregon's land and waterways with raw sewage and create public health hazards.

"In many cases, homeowners tell me they don't have a good financial option to replace their systems," Roblan said. "Without a financing program like I've proposed in this bill, a new system can be a significant burden. And a failing septic system can be equally devastating to a fixed- or low-income homeowner, as to an average-income family struggling to make ends meet."

SB 1563 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###