



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov

Bill gives communities tools to make buildings earthquake resistant

SB 311 allows limited tax exemptions to help incent seismic retrofitting

SALEM – Providing an incentive to upgrade old buildings in anticipation of potential earthquakes will improve public safety and help to preserve historic structures.

Senate Bill 311 – which passed the Senate on a 29-0 vote today – allows cities and counties to adopt and establish limited tax exemption programs for property owners to seismically retrofit vulnerable multifamily, commercial and industrial buildings.

“Based on scientific research that is widely known and acknowledged, the possibility of a major earthquake in the Northwest is not just a possibility; it’s basically a certainty,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “This bill gives communities a tool that they can use to make it less expensive to retrofit buildings. These seismic retrofits will save lives, make economies more resilient and protect the property tax base.”

The program allows cities and counties the choice as to whether they wish to adopt these exemptions. Local jurisdictions also could tailor the scope of the seismic retrofit program to include only the most vulnerable multifamily, commercial or industrial buildings in the community.

To be eligible, a property owner must submit, and complete, a seismic retrofit plan stamped by a registered structural engineer or architect. It also must meet nationally recognized standards by the American Society of Civil Engineers or standards specified by the city or county. Covered costs are limited to engineering, architectural and structural retrofitting. The tax exemptions

are limited to the value of the existing improvements – and not the land – for up to 15 years or the amount of eligible costs, whichever comes first.

SB 311 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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