



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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# NEWS RELEASE

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

## **Septic loans can pay for hooking up to existing systems**

*SB 812 clarifies some specific components of successful DEQ program*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate passed a bill today allowing residents and small businesses with failing septic systems to use an existing low-interest loan program to assess and potentially hook up with existing community septic systems.

Senate Bill 812 – which passed on a 27-0 vote on the Senate floor – specifies that septic system loan funds can be used to conduct a regional evaluation of community on-site septic systems to determine if repair or replacement is necessary. It also says that if a community septic system is available that the loan funds must be used to connect to the existing septic. The home or business then would be disconnected from the onsite system that had been failing.

“This bill allows residents or businesses that have failing septic systems to connect to community systems, when one exists and it’s possible for them to do that,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay), who carried the bill. “This makes it easier and cheaper for people to hook up to existing systems that work, when it’s possible, without having to completely rebuild their system.”

This bill adds clarity to specific grant agreement components for the low-interest loan program administered by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and created by Senate Bill 1563 in the 2016 Legislative Session. That bill appropriated \$250,000 to DEQ to administer the low-interest loan program. Loan funds can be used to replace, upgrade and evaluate residential and small business on-site septic systems that are failing. When there is an existing sewer system, funds can be used to hook up to that, but the clarification in SB 812 was necessary to include community septic systems as a qualifying alternative.

More than 30 percent of Oregonians rely on septic systems to treat wastewater from their homes and businesses. Failing and malfunctioning systems can pollute Oregon's land and waterways with raw sewage, creating significant public health hazards.

"It's good for the environment and water quality and public health," Roblan said. "It's also helpful to small businesses and families, many of whom are struggling just to make ends meet. It benefits rural Oregon tremendously."

SB 812 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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