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CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Whistleblower bill will improve government accountability, protect workers *Senate Bill 996 gives employees more options for reporting misconduct*

SALEM – Legislation that broadens options for workers to point out fraud and abuse in the public sector found enthusiastic support on the Senate floor this morning. Senate Bill 996 expands protections for public sector employees who want to report waste, fraud, or safety hazards.

“Employees should be able to report misconduct without fear of retribution,” said Senator Martha Schrader, chief sponsor of the bill. “Senate Bill 996 will increase transparency across all levels of government because workers will have more options to air their concerns.”

Current Oregon law protects public employees from disciplinary action if they “whistleblow” on a topic related to the state operations to a State Legislator. Senate Bill 996 extends that protection to an elected official at any other level of government, including local officials, city officials, county commissioners, and government auditors.

“This legislation is a natural extension of the whistleblower protections already provided to public sector employees,” said Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. “Public employees need to feel safe when they report legal violations, financial misuse or when they talk with elected officials about these issues. SB 996 will ensure additional protection for public sector whistle-blowers.”

Senate Democrats have made accountable and transparent government a key piece of their [agenda](#) for the February 2010 session. Senate Bill 996 is one example of promoting maximum efficiency in state government.

“This bill is a small example of how we can promote openness in government, making sure that if misconduct occurs, it can be brought to light,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin).

Senate Bill 996 now moves to the House for consideration.

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