



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

February 13, 2012

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Senate Committee approves foreclosure help, protection for unemployed *Series of bills to help struggling Oregonians clear Legislative hurdle*

SALEM – A Senate committee took action this morning on several priority bills that will help Oregonians who continue to struggle in these tough times. These bills are cornerstones of the Senate Democrats’ February 2012 Agenda to help middle class Oregonians and improve government accountability to protect critical services.

The first two bills approved this morning in the Senate General Government, Consumer, and Small Business Protection Committee address the foreclosure crisis in Oregon. Senate Bill 1564 would eliminate the dual-track process in which banks that are in the process of negotiating a mortgage modification with a homeowner are simultaneously pursuing foreclosure.

“Helping homeowners across Oregon who are struggling to stay in their homes is a major priority for Senate Democrats,” said Deputy Senate Majority Leader Alan Bates (D-Medford). “These bills illustrate our commitment to middle class families who are fighting to make ends meet in these challenging times. We hear your concerns and we are on your side.”

The other foreclosure bill approved this morning, SB 1552, is based on pre-foreclosure mediation programs that have proved successful in 21 other states. The bill would allow homeowners to meet with their lender in the presence of a neutral third party before a lender can proceed with a foreclosure sale.

“Oregon’s foreclosure crisis affects every homeowner by dragging down both home prices and our economic recovery,” said Senator Lee Beyer (D-Springfield), chief sponsor of SB 1552. “The backlog of foreclosures and threat of more continues to stall out the home construction industry that has traditionally led us out of recession. It’s time for the Oregon Legislature to take action.”

The General Government Committee also passed a bill that will remove unfair obstacles for Oregonians who are looking for work. If signed into law, Oregon would be the second state in the U.S. to prohibit ads that require an applicant to be currently employed in order to apply for a position. According to Worksource Oregon, 4 of 10 unemployed Oregonians have been without a job for six months or more.

“This is a simple, common sense rule that gives those who are out of work a fair chance at getting in the door for an interview,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham). “There are already too many hurdles for the long term unemployed. This bill levels the playing field in a small but significant way for those who

are looking for work.”

The final bill approved this morning increases transparency and accountability in the awarding of state contracts for goods and services. Senate Bill 1518 has three simple provisions that will improve transparency in how contracts are awarded. The first prohibits a vendor from writing the specifications of a project and then turning around and bidding on that project. The second provision allows a bidder to include information on the number of Oregon jobs that will be created if that contractor is chosen for the project. The final provision requires the Department of Administrative Services to report to the Legislature about “special procurements,” a contracting procedure that allows state agencies to bypass competitive bidding rules.

“This bill takes significant steps toward transparency, accountability, and a level playing field in awarding state contracts,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Our budget situation this session demands that we deliver services more efficiently and with greater savings for taxpayers.”

All four bills approved this morning now go to the Senate floor for consideration by the entire body.

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