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Senate Rules Committee approves revisions to 2007's landmark ethics reforms
SB 30 will ease compliance for local jurisdictions while maintaining high standards

SALEM—The Senate Rules Committee approved Senate Bill 30 this evening in a bipartisan and unanimous vote. SB 30 will protect the privacy of hundreds of volunteer public servants across the state without weakening the strict ethical standards enacted two years ago in the 2007 Oregon Ethics Reform Act.

“Whenever you pass sweeping and far-reaching legislation there are unintended consequences,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), who chairs the Senate Rules Committee. “The Rules committee heard about these consequences throughout the interim and worked with mayors, councilors, commissioners, and open government advocates across Oregon to address their concerns. The bill we passed today speaks to these concerns and will help local jurisdictions act in accordance with the public interest to maintain strong standards, while not creating unreasonable hurdles for compliance.”

More than 97 percent of the people required to comply with the new standards did so, but hundreds of others, mostly volunteers in rural Oregon, chose to resign instead, citing privacy concerns with portions of the statements of economic interests. Senate Bill 30 maintains the integrity and intent of Senate Bill 10 while answering the concerns of many of those who chose to resign.

“This state has a strong history of citizen engagement and we want to protect and encourage civic participation. When it became apparent that some of the new requirements in SB 10 were creating an undue burden on Oregon’s local officials and instigating hundreds of resignations we knew we had to revisit ethics reform,” said Devlin.

Devlin said that one of the key intentions of addressing SB 10 was to clear up definitional ambiguity in the law to give cities, counties, and special districts clarity around what was expected of them. “Unlike the Legislature, local jurisdictions don’t have the type of resources we have to seek legal counsel. These fixes provide clear guidance so that we can ensure both transparency in government and make compliance more straightforward for the typical public official.”

The changes incorporated in SB 30 are the result of recommendations from the Ethics Reform Review Team called by the Senate President and Speaker of the House in response to mass resignations of local officials in April of 2008. The interim House and Senate Rules Committees worked through the recommendations of that team, taking public testimony in the Capitol and in Pendleton.

Devlin and Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) will carry the bill to the Senate floor next week.

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