



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 18, 2013

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REP. GILLIAM & REP. WHISNANT CALL FOR STRICTER STANDARDS ON TUITION EQUITY

SALEM – Calling for stricter standards and greater oversight, Rep. Vic Gilliam (R – Silverton) and Rep. Gene Whisnant (R – Sunriver) voted NO today on HB 2787 which would allow certain undocumented Oregon residents to qualify for in-state tuition rates.

“While the concept has improved, issues still remain which we need to address in the legislation,” said Rep. Whisnant. “Those issues include equal admission standards, limiting the bill to only students currently in Oregon at the time it is effective, and putting a sunset clause the bill so the Legislature can evaluate its true fiscal impact. These changes would make it better and clearer for everyone.”

Rep. Gilliam and Rep. Whisnant voted in favor of amendments which addressed the first two issues on Friday. Specifically, the amendments would have made it explicit that undocumented students receiving these benefits would not receive an admission status “...greater than the admission status granted to Oregon residents who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.” In addition, the amendments made the bill applicable only to “...students who are residents of the United States on the effective date of this 2013 Act.”

Those amendments were defeated on a party-line vote, with Republican members, Rep. Gilliam, Rep. Whisnant, Rep. Jim Huffman (R – The Dalles) and Rep. Johnson (R – Hood River), all in support.

The sunset clause was part of a separate set of amendments that were not allowed a vote. When Rep. Whisnant brought the issue up again on Monday, Chair Dembrow (D – Portland) declined to allow it to be considered and told him to take it up on the Senate side.

“There are real fiscal questions about the impact of this bill that we’ve yet to get a clear answer to as well as the potential impact of federal action,” said Rep. Gilliam. “That is the value of the sunset clause and we shouldn’t abdicate our responsibility by assuming the Senate will address it. Our job is to take ideas and make them into appropriate public policy. The three additional amendments I supported would have at least taken us in the right direction.”

The legislation now moves to the full Oregon House for a vote.

Rep. Whisnant commented, “I hope the legislative and community advocates for this bill will work with me and others to reduce the cost of higher education for all Oregon citizens, including Oregon Latino citizens and other Oregon minority citizens.”

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