



**GENE WHISNANT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 53**

**For Immediate Release
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**HOUSE REPUBLICANS CALL FOR ACTION ON FRAUD & ABUSE
Requested Full House Vote on Five Bills**

SALEM, OR - House Republicans called for a full vote on five bills on Wednesday in an effort to address fraud and abuse issues within Oregon's public assistance programs. A recent audit from Secretary of State Kate Brown identified serious fraud issues and called on the Legislature and Governor Kitzhaber to take action.

Rep. Whisnant asked his colleagues to vote on HB 2721, which requires public employees involved in administration of public assistance to report suspected fraud.

"Every dollar lost to fraud takes away that dollar from citizens who really need assistance," Rep. Whisnant (R-Sunriver) stated. "We have a fixed amount of funding to help our citizens in need and must be sure each dollar is used legitimately."

"The Secretary of State's audit identified millions in waste and fraud from just a sampling of cases," said Rep. Gail Whitsett (R – Klamath Falls). "These bills are a good first step toward creating systems to identify and correct fraud and abuse within the system."

The bills on which the Republicans asked for a vote were referred to the House Human Services and Housing Committee but not scheduled for public hearings. Further, an attempt to amend Senate Bill 757 to create a task force to examine fraud within the food stamp program failed when the bill was not scheduled for a hearing in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee despite passing the Senate unanimously.

Rep. Whisnant added, "My legislative career has been devoted to making our government accountable, transparent, and efficient. These bills would have accomplished my objectives and the actions which the audit report demanded."

"Leaders from both sides of the aisle have called for action on this issue and it is time the Legislature addressed it," said Rep. Bruce Hanna (R-Roseburg).

The bills are:

- HB 2717: Permits the Dept. of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority to suspend public assistance to a recipient who fails – without good cause – to provide requested documentation in connection with a possible overpayment of public assistance.
- HB 2718: Requires the Dept. of Human Services to establish a registry of individuals and families receiving social services from state and county agencies to enable these agencies to coordinate and not duplicate the provision of services.
- HB 2721: Requires public employees involved in administration of public assistance to report suspected fraud using procedures adopted by the Dept. of Human Services or Oregon Health Authority.
- HB 3252: Requires electronic benefits transfer cards to display the photograph of all adults authorized to use it.
- HB 3322: Requires the Department of Human Services to ensure that electronic benefits transfer cards cannot be used to purchase prepaid credit cards.

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