

MINUTES

Senior & Disabled Services
Advocacy Committee
Florence Event Center, 1715 Quince St., Florence

December 9, 2005

Members Present: Kathy Jenness, Chair; Dan Arkin, Tim Baxter, Dianne Burch, Marion Esty, Mary Johnson, Ed Necker, Jim Patterson, and Leslie Relle.

Members Excused: Jane Boren, Andrea Gillispie, and Maureen Wadst.

Guests Present: James Dean, Senator Joanne Verger, Representative Alan Brown, and Representative Arnie Roblan.

Staff Present: Patti Little, Kay Metzger, and Ted Stevens.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The December 9, 2005 meeting of the Advocacy Committee was convened at 1:45 PM by Kathy Jenness, Committee Chairperson.

2. CONVERSATION WITH LEGISLATORS

Ed Necker served as moderator for this portion of the meeting. He welcomed Senator Verger and Representative Roblan. (Note: Representative Brown arrived at 2:30 PM.) He asked everyone present to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Ed invited legislators to report on the key issues upon which they worked during the 2005 Session of the State Legislature. Senator Verger started, followed by Representative Roblan. Upon his arrival, Representative Brown was given an opportunity to introduce himself and talk about his accomplishments.

Senator Verger offered the following comments. She stated that she is a centrist who considers each matter on its merits and, as a result, does not pursue a special interest agenda. During the 2005 Session, she chaired the Senate Transportation

Committee and served on the General Government Committee. While being very supportive of issues impacting senior citizens, she shared that her most significant accomplishments during the Session involved transportation issues, notably, “Connect Oregon” and funding for the expansion of the North Bend Airport. Regarding issues for seniors and people with disabilities, she opined that both groups did not fair very well during the 2005 Session. She stated that she wants to discuss with the Advocacy Committee ways to move seniors and people with disabilities higher up on the State’s list of priorities.

Representative Roblan talked about his professional career (32 years at Marshfield High School, moving from teacher to principal) and his personal background. He opined that he is a moderate and is someone who looks for “solutions” for Oregon. Regarding his priorities during the 2005 Session, he stated that he focused on economic development, education, and health care issues. He served on the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and the House Education Committee. His accomplishments during the 2005 Session included: enactment of OPI Modernization and Mental Health Parity bills, obtaining funding for the North Bend Airport, and passage of bills dealing with water rights. Regarding funding for human services programs, Representative Roblan observed that legislators were hobbled by the decisions of the Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to not consider revenue raising measures during the 2005 Session.

Expanding on a theme mentioned earlier, Senator Verger stated that advocates for seniors and people with disabilities need to pursue new approaches, since the ones used during the past several legislative sessions have not, for the most part, been successful in delivering the desired legislation and funds for both populations. She noted that the exception to this statement was the enactment of the OPI Modernization Act of 2005. She opined that legislators wanted to support and expand OPI because it focuses on something positive – keeping older people independent in their own homes. She urged S&DS’ advocates to figure out how to “re-frame” their issues, turning them around from negatives into positives. She also urged advocates to “not look back.” In other words, she advised that they not complain about the outcomes not realized from prior legislative sessions. In addition, she stressed that S&DS’ advocates need to figure out how to reach out to, and encourage others to join in their advocacy. Finally, she urged S&DS’ advocates to recruit and use a well known and respected Oregonian as a spokesperson for their cause, using this person to promote its issues in the media.

Mr. Roblan reported that he is serving on the House Revenue Committee in the interim between the 2005 and 2007 sessions. In preparation for the 2007 legislative session, he shared that this committee will spend considerable time reviewing currently-approved tax expenditures. And, given the reluctance of Oregonians to approve new sources of revenue (i.e., taxes), he suggested that advocates push for changes to Oregon's tax expenditure system. In addition to looking at the possible repeal of individual tax expenditures, he suggested that there is the need for broader reforms, specifically, increased accountability for all tax expenditures, and the insertion of sunset clauses in all current and future tax expenditures.

Following Representative Roblan's remarks about tax expenditures, both Senator Verger and Representative Brown remarked that putting more money into the budget pie through the repeal of selected tax expenditures does not guarantee that the money restored to the General Fund will go into senior and disability services. They suggested that new senior and disability services initiatives be tied to specific funding sources.

Regarding the observation that senior and disability services are low on the list of priorities for funding within the State Budget, Representative Roblan offered a cynical perspective – that State bureaucrats reduce funding for these services in the Governor's Recommended Budget (rather than other programs) on the belief that advocates will work during the Session to get the money restored by the Legislature. To avoid the repetition of this phenomenon, Senator Verger urged advocates to work with DHS, DAS and the Governor's Office during the preparation of the Governor's Recommended Budget to forestall the attack on funding for senior and disability services. She suggested that legislative champions be lined up now to help with this process in the coming months.

When asked to comment on what they are hearing from their senior and disabled constituents, Senator Verger and Representative Brown reported that they are not hearing much from these individuals. Representative Roblan reported that his constituents are concerned about public transportation, especially on the coast, and services for veterans.

At approximately 3:30 PM, Ed Necker brought the Legislative Conversation portion of the meeting to a close by thanking the legislators for their attendance, active participation, and candor. Members concurred with Ed's sentiments by

recognizing the legislators with a round of applause. At 3:35 PM, Ed turned the gavel back to Kathy Jenness, Committee Chair, to run the balance of the meeting.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 2005 MEETING

Given the time and the desire to conclude the meeting quickly, consideration of the Minutes of the November 18, 2005 meeting was postponed until the January 2006 meeting.

4. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. January 20th Meeting and Legislative Conservation

Ted Stevens reminded members that its next meeting and legislative conservation will be held on Friday, January 20, 2006. He stated that this meeting will convene at 1:30 PM and will be held at the following locations: Community Room, Boulders on the River Apartments, Goodpasture Island Road, Eugene. He indicated that Senator Vicki Walker and Representative Bob Ackerman have confirmed their attendance. Calls will need to be made to Representative Debi Farr to secure her participation.

b. Tax Expenditures – Subcommittee Report

Jim Patterson reported on the subcommittee meeting held earlier in the week. He stated that the criteria for the review of tax expenditures were approved with minor modifications, that all tax expenditures proposed for repeal by the UoO intern were reviewed and acted upon, and that broader reforms to Oregon's tax expenditure system were discussed. Regarding the specific items targeted for repeal, it was reported that the subcommittee accepted many of the intern's recommendations, but rejected others. Given the ones remaining on the list for elimination, Patti Little reported that they totaled approximately \$26 million. It was reported that a final report and recommendations should be available to the Committee for its consideration and action within the next couple of months.

Tim Baxter asked about the process for the review and approval of this report and its recommendations. Ted Stevens explained that in order for S&DS and its

advocates to be able to disseminate the report and recommendations in the name of LCOG, it will need to be accepted by the agency's Board of Directors. He stated that consideration of the matter may not occur until the Board's April meeting, given that the Committee will have little time to consider and action upon it until its March meeting. Following Ted's reply, Tim also urged the Committee to begin soon to develop its priorities for the 2007 Legislative Session and to formulate strategies for moving them forward, once approved by LCOG.

5. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING/ADJOURN

Kathy Jenness reminded members that the next meeting of the Advocacy Committee will be held on Friday, January 20, 2006, 1:30 – 3:30 PM, at the Boulders Apartments, Eugene.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 PM.

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