

MINUTES

Senior & Disabled Services
Advocacy Committee
Boulders on the River Club House
655 Goodpasture Island Road
Eugene Or 97401

January 20, 2006

Members Present: Kathy Jenness, Chair; Dan Arkin, Tim Baxter, Dianne Burch, Mary Johnson, Ed Necker, Jim Patterson, Andrea Gillispie, and Maureen Wadst.

Members Excused: Jane Boren, Marion Esty, and Leslie Relle.

Guests Present: Senator Walker, Representatives Farr and Ackerman, Ellen Bombaro, Ruth Ann Paul, and Dan Arkin's daughter

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

The January 20, 2006 meeting of the Advocacy Committee was convened at 1:45 PM by Kathy Jenness, Committee Chairperson. Since she was losing her voice, she asked Ted Stevens, S&DS Director, to facilitate the business portion of the meeting.

2. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

Action: Without objection, the agenda was accepted, as printed.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2005 AND DECEMBER 9, 2005 MEETINGS

Motions:

- a. Moved by Mary Johnson, seconded by Ed Necker, and carried unanimously to accept the minutes of the Minutes of the November 18, 2005.
- b. Moved by Ed Necker, seconded by Mary Johnson, and carried unanimously to accept the Minutes of December 9, 2005 meeting.

4. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. February 17 Meeting and Legislative Conservation

Patti Little reminded members that its next meeting/legislative conservation will be held on Friday, February 17, 2006. She stated that this meeting will convene at 2:00 P.M. and will be held at the following location: Hilyard Center, 2580 Hilyard Street, Eugene. She reported that Senator Morrisette and Representatives Barnhart and Beyer have been invited to the meeting. Calls will be made to the legislators to confirm their attendance.

b. Tax Expenditures – Draft Position Paper

Ted Stevens provided background, reminding members that this paper was developed at their request. He reviewed the process leading to its development, including the delegation of some decisions to an ad hoc subcommittee comprised of Jim Patterson and Marion Esty. He reported that the research on tax expenditures was completed by a graduate U of O student. He urged members to review the draft paper that was mailed with the agenda and to come prepared to discuss it in detail at its March meeting.

c. Other business

It was noted that Peter DeFazio's office is offering assistance with Medicare Part D.

Ted Stevens shared that the Register Guard had reported that 350 Medicare Part D clients have used the State's "fall back" assistance plan.

On behalf of the Advocacy Committee, Dan Arkin presented Ted Stevens with a farewell cake and gifts. He thanked him for his dedication to the issues concerning seniors and people with disabilities.

5. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING REMINDER

Friday, February 17, 2006, 2:00 – 4:00 PM, at the Hilyard Community Center, Eugene.

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CONVERSATION WITH LEGISLATORS

Ed Necker served as moderator for this portion of the meeting. He welcomed Senator Walker and Representatives Farr and Ackerman. He asked everyone present to introduce themselves. Senator Walker stated that she and Representative Ackerman had requested a special legislative session to deal with the DHS budget shortfall. Representative Ackerman announced that he plans to retire at the end of this term.

Following introductions, Ed invited legislators to report on the key issues upon which they worked during the 2005 Session of the State Legislature.

Representative Farr started, followed by Senator Walker, then Representative Ackerman.

Representative Farr offered the following comments: 1) She stated that she served as Vice Chair of the Veteran Services Committee which was responsible for a \$2.6 million allocation to Veteran Offices statewide. She noted that Lane County will receive \$266,000 for the biennium. 2) She shared that \$2 million general fund dollars were allocated to the Area Agencies on Aging to begin to address a long standing funding problem (“equity”) with DHS. She plans to revisit this issue next session. 3) She explained that the Oregon Project Independence (OPI) Modernization Act was passed and that it will provide services to people with disabilities. 4) She noted that she is currently working on new regulations for payday loans and that a hearing on the subject is tentatively scheduled in Eugene for April 18, 2006, from 5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M., at the Campbell Senior Center.

Senator Walker offered the following comments: 1) She stated she worked on 139 pieces of legislation last session, 59 of which were enacted into law. She believes her greatest accomplishment was the passage of SB 408, which

targeted for-profit utility companies. She also worked on a bill which prohibits public employers from entering into confidential settlement agreements. 2) She served as Chair of the Senate Education Committee and worked on a bill to allow high school students to take college credits during the last two years of high school at school district expense.

Representative Ackerman reported the following: 1) He served as the Chair of the House Civil Law Committee and was the first Democrat to serve in this capacity in a Republican controlled House of Representatives. 2) He drafted HB 3303 which sought to resolve contractual problems between the State and the AAAs. He shared that this was a very complicated bill. It passed the House with a unanimous vote, but was killed in the Senate due to a veto threat from the Governor.

In response to the question of what major issues were planned for the next session, the guest legislators shared the following:

Bob Ackerman stated that there was a need for a special legislative session now to close the budget hole in the DHS budget, rather than to wait for the January 2007 session. He believes that the Governor and many legislators do not wish to debate this issue prior to the general elections in November 2006.

Vickie Walker is contemplating a run for Governor and hopes to make a decision soon on whether she will run. She believes that the jobs being created in Oregon today do not provide adequate pay or benefits and, as a result, are contributing to the increases in DHS' caseloads. She would like to see a special legislative session called to address DHS' budget shortfall. She also noted that there are problems at the Oregon Department of Transportation. She stated that health care needs to be more affordable and has now surpassed education as an issue with voters. Senator Walker felt that during the 2005 session the Senate was complacent and failed to show leadership. Regarding the "social contract," it is her belief that the human services "safety net" must be defined and, once defined, its cost of operation calculated and, then, the Legislature needs to appropriate the money for its operation.

Representative Farr believes that DHS needs to be managed more efficiently and appropriately. Next session she plans to focus on "successful families,"

including good paying jobs and lunch programs in public schools.

During the questions and answer portion of the meeting, the legislators offered suggestions on methods to improve S&DS' legislative advocacy. The following ideas were shared:

- 1) Hostile advocates shut themselves off from legislators.
- 2) Building a personal relationship with a legislator, i.e., taking him/her out to coffee is an effective tool.
- 3) Put a human face on the statistics.
- 4) Redefine public interest by putting the issue into a social context rather than getting bogged down in the details of bills.
- 5) Reach out beyond the Lane County legislative delegation; speak to opponents of issues, as well as, supporters.
- 6) Be a stronger voice regarding the need for new revenue for human services.
- 7) More Oregonians need to speak up regarding the fact that Oregon has a failing tax system (do not be seduced by the waste in government pitch).
- 8) Work together in coalitions (engage citizens).
- 9) If you hit a wall, find a way to go around it.

Other issues mentioned at the meeting include:

- 1) Make long term care (LTC) insurance more affordable; provide it in a manner similar to unemployment insurance. Ted Stevens reported the delegates to the recently concluded White House Conference on Aging recommended that a LTC benefit be added to Medicare (as a new Part E). He also mentioned that the recently enacted OPI Modernization Act provides some funds to allow AAAs to educate citizens about LTC insurance and the need for more personal responsibility with the financing of long term care. He also suggested that Oregon explore federal demonstration waivers which allow individuals to shelter some of their income if they purchase and use LTC insurance to meet their LTC needs for a period of time. Programs of this type are currently available in four states.
- 2) Urge legislative leadership to expand video conferencing capacity which will encourage greater citizen participation

3) Ted Stevens stated that during the last session a request for an increase in the reimbursement rate for Medicaid Meals on Wheels (\$150,000 - \$200,000 in general funds for the biennium) was not finalized. He asked that the legislators look into this issue.

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.

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