

MINUTES

Senior & Disabled Services  
**Advocacy Committee**  
Hilyard Center  
2580 Hilyard Street  
Eugene, OR 97405

February 17, 2006

Members Present: Kathy Jenness, Chair; Dan Arkin, Tim Baxter, Dianne Burch, Ed Necker, Leslie Relle, Kevin O'Reilly

Members Excused: Jane Boren, Jim Patterson

Guests Present: Senator Bill Morrisette and spouse Janice, Representatives Terry Beyer, Phil Barnhart

Staff Present: Kay Metzger, Nancy Sargent-Johnson

**1. Call to Order**

By consensus, the meeting of the Advocacy Committee was postponed in order to begin the Legislative Conversation portion of the meeting.

Prior to the arrival of Reps. Beyer and Barnhart, a brief discussion was held with Senator Morrisette regarding the expansion of video conferencing for advocacy and legislative activities. Kathy Jenness noted that she was participating by video conference in a DHS related committee meeting next week. S&DS staff will follow up with the McKenzie Center DHS office regarding the availability of this service. The group agreed to continue to pursue this idea at future meetings.

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**CONVERSATION WITH LEGISLATORS**

Ed Necker served as moderator for this portion of the meeting. He welcomed Senator Morrisette, who had arrived early. Once Representatives Terry Beyer and Phil Barnhart arrived, they were also welcomed.

Following introductions, Ed invited the Legislators to report on the key issues upon which they worked during the 2005 Session of the State Legislature. Senator Morrisette began, followed by Rep. Barnhart and Rep. Beyer.

Senator Morrisette stated he was Chair of the Interim Public Health Committee. Long term care issues are high on his list of priorities. He has been working on changing statutory language to allow some foster home residents to be left alone. Additionally, Senator Morrisette was recognized for working on the Oregon Project Independence Modernization Act.

Rep. Barnhart stated most of his accomplishments last year did not deal with S&DS' issues. However, he did join in on some of our issues. Rep. Barnhart worked on increasing services to the County Veterans Services Offices. He commented that this was a bi-partisan issue, and there never was a lot of debate about whether to fund the services. Additionally, Rep. Barnhart stated he submitted at least 12 revenue bills, none of which succeeded. His intent was to start a discussion on improving the revenue picture. He is highly interested in closing tax loopholes and would like to explore why we treat tax expenditures differently than budget expenditures. He would like to push for a comparison of tax expenditures and budget expenditures, perhaps every two years. An evaluation of the two would illustrate the marginal value of the tax expenditures compared to the cost to the budget resulting in service cuts.

Rep. Beyer states she worked mostly on transportation issues during the last session. She worked diligently on "Connect Oregon", a project that kept two trains running.

The remainder of the meeting was a rather free-flowing discussion, including topics such as how to attract business to Oregon and the expansion of universal design. The following summary addresses highlights of the discussion topics set forth in the meeting agenda.

Major Issues for Next Session:

- Senator Morrisette plan to work on the problem with liability insurance coverage for foster homes. The cost is very high, some cannot even get it, and some are going out of business as a result.
- Senator Morrisette plan to propose a beer tax to fund county programs already in operation.

- Rep. Barnhart believes exploring additional efficiencies as the solution to the budget problem is not the right answer. However, as long as Republicans are in control of the House it is impossible to pass revenue bills.

#### Comments on S&DS' Legislative Priorities:

- Rep. Beyer stated they looked good, she supported them.
- Senator Morrisette stated that he believes we need to push for equity to be part of the Governor's budget in order to be successful in that area. He requested a white paper on the topic.
- Rep. Barnhart firmly believes Legislators need to be honest about the effects of budget decisions. They can't assume agencies can continue to make cuts in order to balance the budget.
- Rep. Beyer concluded that there was inexperience at the fiscal level, i.e. those committees that dealt with budget issues such as Ways and Means.

#### Methods to Improve S&DS' Advocacy:

- Partner with other groups on a common cause, i.e. tax expenditures. Work with other groups such as education and law enforcement on a mutual goal.
- Target advocacy at the Federal level, particularly Senator Gordon Smith
- Regarding increasing the Medicaid reimbursement for Meals on Wheels, partner with other counties, Oregon Food Banks, school lunch programs.

At approximately 4:00 p.m. Ed Necker thanked the Legislators for their input and active participation in the meeting. The meeting was adjourned.