



UPDATE ON AGRICULTURE ISSUES BY SUE BOYD

Our May units on agriculture included bills then in the Legislature potentially regulating crops linked to concerns about genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Now that the session is over, it's time for an update on their fate.

HB 2427 was aimed at blocking a new administrative rule which would have allowed 2500 acres of canola (rapeseed) to be grown in the Willamette Valley for the first time. Specialty seed farmers were concerned that GMO canola pollen could contaminate their crops.

The bill passed in the last days of the session and will continue the ban on canola in most of the valley until 2019. It provides funding for Oregon State University researchers to conduct a study of the potential impact of canola on other crops and the economic implications of lifting the ban. They are to report their findings to an interim legislative committee no later than November 1, 2017. The bill automatically repeals the ban on canola production in 2019, unless there is further legislative action.



SB 633, which would have reserved regulation of seed production to the state, died in committee. By prohibiting the enactment or enforcement of local measures affecting seed production, it targeted initiatives such as the ban on GMO crops which has qualified for the Jackson County ballot in May, 2014. The bill's supporters are expected to attempt to bring it back for another try in the 2014 legislative session.

Locally, a Eugene group, **Support Local Food Rights**, is



seeking to place a measure which includes a GMO crop ban on Lane County's May, 2014 ballot as part of more far reaching food and farm rights campaign. However county clerk Cheryl Betschart rejected the petition, ruling that it was too broad and violated an Oregon Constitutional requirement that ballot measures deal with only one issue at a time. According to a story in *The Register-Guard*,



in addition to the petition's stated goal "to create and protect a local food system," Betschart identified four other subjects in the proposed ordinance: "the creation of rights of natural communities"; "the creation of rights to self government and sovereign citizenship"; "the elimination or curtailment of corporate rights"; and "limited immunity to federal patent law." The group plans to appeal the ruling to Lane County Circuit Court.

Earlier this year, a similar proposal in Benton County was twice denied a place on the ballot because of a ruling that it violated the single subject requirement for measures. That ruling is being challenged in court.

CHECK OUT INSIDE

Fall Kickoff luncheon, Mental Health Interest group, Observer Corp, Legislative Report, VOTE signs, and office volunteers.

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**FALL LUNCHEON -
ANNE BEST & KATHY GONZALES MEMBERSHIP CO-CHAIRS**

We are planning a lovely September fall luncheon. Ted Wheeler, state treasurer, will be our featured speaker. The event will be held on September 19, 11:30 to 1:30, at the Eugene Hilton.

Again this year we are hoping to attract new members and, again, we are urging all of you to invite **a guest sponsored for free** by the League. We hope that you will also submit names to the League office of other women

you know who might be interested in attending the event if sent a personal invitation.

As you know, one of the League's current goals is to expand membership and to diversify our membership. We urge all of you to make a serious attempt to help with this effort. Let's make this the best fall luncheon ever and top last year's record of 22 new members gained through the fall luncheon. We look forward to seeing you all in September.



THE MENTAL HEALTH INTEREST GROUP by Susan Tavakolian

Sheila Sundahl, past president of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in Lane County, spoke to the Mental Health group at their June meeting. She presented a very interesting description of her own experience with mental health services in Lane County, as well as a comprehensive description

of the services available in the area. NAMI began almost 30 years ago to provide information about mental health services to families and individuals. The organization also provides education and support for people with concerns about mental health on a family to family as well as a peer to peer basis.

The next meeting in the fall (the date has not yet been set) will deal with an update on the recent legislative action to fund a psychiatric hospital in Junction City. Look for updates in the next Argus.

UNITS UNITS UNITS UNITS UNITS

Do you belong to a unit? If so, you know it's a great way it is to discuss current issues, influence League policy, and it's a wonderful social event.

Don't belong to a unit yet? We'll have a schedule in next month's ARGUS to see if there is a time and place which works for you.

OR consider starting a new unit with your friends.

Get in touch with me and we'll see what works. Who knows, maybe we can start an on-line unit!

**Charlcie Kaylor, Unit Chair
charlcie@efn.org**

ACTION - KAPPY EATON & PAT HOCKEN, Co-Chairs

LOCAL ACTION - PAT HOCKEN

Observer Corps

My column this month is a report on the Observer Corps of the League of Women Voters of Lane County, which was resurrected in June after a long dormancy.

League observers have been attending the weekly Tuesday meetings of the Lane County Board of Commissioners (BCC) since June 4. Lane County was chosen as the first governmental body to observe because of the interest generated by spring unit meetings which focused on the structure of county government as well as public safety issues.

Thanks to members Fran Boehner, Alice Davenport, and Lois Taylor for attending BCC meetings and submitting brief report forms about what occurred. Before each meeting, the observers download and review the agenda and background materials from the County's website so they can understand the discussion and the decision options. Their job is to observe, not to speak on behalf of the League. A letter of introduction was sent to the Board of Commissioners informing

them that League members, wearing a LWV pin, would be attending their meetings on a regular basis, and the observers have been casually greeted.

So what have the observers seen? They have watched the BCC when it met as the Board of Health and the Housing and Community Services Agency. The BCC has considered the appeal of a land use decision regarding gravel mining, adopted the 2013-14 fiscal year budget, applied for numerous grants, and held a work session on economic development incentives - quite a variety of issues. The observers have also noted that the commissioners sometimes cannot be heard by the audience because of ineffective use of their microphones. The situation has improved since we informed the board about the problem.

Plans for the Future

There are two reasons the League observes governmental meetings: 1) to show elected and appointed officials that the public is interested in their decisions and 2) to gain knowledge about the responsibilities of the agency and the actions

taken to fulfill those responsibilities. Information thus gathered is very useful in both advocacy efforts and voter education.

Are you interested in becoming a League

observer or learning more about the program? Over the next year we want to observe more jurisdictions and to cover more Lane County meetings, but we can only accomplish this goal if more members volunteer to be an observer. *Is there a particular government agency you want to learn more about?* Examples could be the City of Eugene, City of Cottage Grove, City of Springfield, public utilities, K-12 school districts, or Lane Community College. You can observe by yourself or with a buddy.

I will be conducting an observer training session in late September or mid October or both. I will attend meetings with new observers until they feel comfortable going by themselves. Please contact me at 541-343-1138 or jphocken@comcast.net if you want more information. More information in the September Argus. I hope you will consider this interesting task.



ACTION
COMMITTEE
AUGUST 7,
9:30 AM
175 S. GARDEN
WAY

STATE OF THE STATE - KAPPY EATON



This report will cover some (not all) of the important issues for

the League and Oregonians in general that were discussed and acted upon or died during the 2013 session of the 77th Oregon Assembly. It was convened for the purpose of organizing on January 14, began hearings of bills on February 4, and adjourned July 8. The statutory date for adjournment was July 13. While a number of critical decisions were made, another group of important concerns were left "on the cutting room floor" so to speak. My personal assessment would grade the effort at C+ because of political party "drawing lines in the sand" regarding too many issues.

2013-15 Legislatively Adopted Budget (LAB)

The final budget agreement is comprised of planned expenditures of \$15.6 billion general fund (GF), \$0.8 billion lottery funds, \$26.6 billion other funds (fees, contracts, charges, etc.), and \$16.8 billion federal funds. The total state budget of \$59.8 billion is a 4.6% increase from the 2011-2013 LAB, excluding Oregon University System other funds and federal funds which are no longer part of the state budget.

The basic reve-

nue numbers are representative of the May 2013 economic and revenue forecast. Lottery funds are split between regular lottery funds and Measure 76 lottery funds, which are dedicated to specific natural resource uses.

There are three sections to the state's budget tables which includes lottery and general funds.

Resources: based on May 2013 forecast, GF resources adjusted for estimated interest costs for use of Tax Anticipation Notes by the Treasury, lottery funds reduced by projected distributions for county economic development and transfers to the Education Stability Fund, additional resources approved by legislative action, an amount of additional tax credits beyond current law. Actual final resources will be officially presented in the close of session forecast in September.

Expenditures: identified as approved in all budget actions taken by the legislature during the regular 2013 session for the 2013-15 biennium.

Ending Balance: regular ending balances include \$150 million GF, \$15 million lottery funds, another \$3.9 million lottery funds for specific agency cash flow needs, and \$10.1 million Measure 76 lottery funds for cash flow and debt service as well as supplemental ending balances

created due to uncertainty regarding the state's overall economic situation of \$154.9 million GF and \$1.4 million lottery funds.

A brief tally of the 2013-15 LAB is as follows, based on the May 2013 Revenue Forecast:

1. Total Resources: The sum of GF \$15.8 billion, lottery funds \$910.4 million (less dedicated distributions to Education Stability fund \$189.8 million and to County Economic Development \$33.8 million), and Measure 76 lottery funds \$174.9 million yields total current law resources of \$16.688 billion. After the increase of additional resources of \$139.7 million including \$50.4 from the Emergency Fund Balance and a reduction of \$53.2 million for tax credits, the net resources for the biennium total \$16.775 billion.

2. Expenditures: Total GF lottery fund budgeted expenditures are \$16.4 billion, with a projected regular ending balance of \$179.1 million and supplemental ending balance of \$156.2 million. The major expenditure areas include K-12 (State School Fund) \$6.55 billion, community colleges, universities and other education \$1.9 billion; Human Services \$4.2 billion; Public Safety \$2 billion, and Judicial \$638.9 million.

Check out the Budget Information Brief at
<http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/2013-3%20LAB%20Summary%2013-15.pdf>

Fiscal Policy

The Governor's proposed budget, presented December 1 as required by law, and the Ways and Means co-chair's budget which came about the end of March, were not too far apart in terms of the priorities relating to K-12, public safety and PERS reform. Both gave public education \$6.5 billion, sought revenue from reduced or repealed tax credits, continued the hospital provider tax (\$2 billion with additions), and targeted PERS. However, the fault line between the Republican (Rs) and the Democrat (Ds) budget plans was drawn early and was never resolved despite efforts that continued until the session ended. The

Grand Bargain

was in play until the final gavel. It consisted primarily of two bills that would have increased the K-12 appropriation to about \$7 billion and would have provided additional millions to the universities, community colleges, and mental health. Because tax revenue was included, a 3/5 majority was required - two Rs votes plus all of the Ds.

The adopted PERS reform in SB 822 consisted of two pieces - reduced cost of living annual raises to retirees (given July 1) and repeal of benefits to non-resident Oregon PERS retirees that

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STATE ACTION continued

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were enacted to help cover Oregon income taxes. In addition, a portion of anticipated increases in employer contribution rates were postponed to the 2015-17 biennium. These changes reduced employer expenditures by about \$800 million for the 2013-15 biennium. The measure was passed early in the session on party lines, and the attempt to further reduce and gain additional dollars up to almost \$1 billion via the "Bargain", died at sine die. The Ds would not approve it.

The "Bargain" tax package would have reduced higher income individual's personal income deductions, raised the corporate income tax rate, raised tobacco taxes by 10 cents, and revised the senior medical deduction through a means test, among other income producing elements. The Rs would not support it because it did not lower taxes on small businesses. Thus the final budget was passed, and the opportunity to really move Oregon forward for the next decade was lost.

Elections, Voters and Political Campaigns



The Secretary of State pressed for several changes in voter regis-

tration with mixed results. The change in title for the long-term absent elector to military or overseas elector to conform to the federal law was enacted. However, the modernization of voter registration by an electronic form through the DMV of newly licensed drivers, and the reduction of the registration age to 16 years didn't make it through the Senate. The League supported these bills. The bill to require the state and all counties to provide voter information materials in other than English was changed to establish a Task Force on Minority Language Voting Materials and report to the Legislature by October 1, 2014 for possible action in 2015.

In the interests of preventing vote fraud, the delayed



ballot security measure was approved. It calls for video scanning of all areas in county election offices and provides a detailed process and time lines for destroying spoiled and unused ballots of all kinds. Several Election Division bills relating to initiatives and campaign reforms were passed including requiring chief petitioners to do criminal background checks of paid petitioners (now done by Secretary of State), and requiring that any organization, individual or entity

that pays petitioners must register with the Secretary of State and receive training in the process. Also in the campaign finance area, more transparency regarding independent expenditures given for both candidates and measures will be required by filing contributions electronically to the Secretary of State and appearing on OR-STAR for public scrutiny.

University Governance

After a long and bumpy road, the proposal to allow

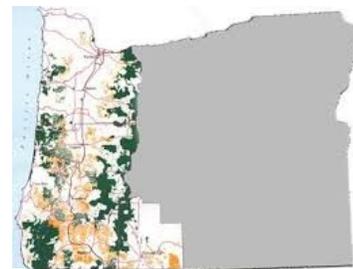


Oregon public universities to establish local boards of directors was adopted. The University of Oregon and Portland State University are granted immediate authority (UO expected by fall 2013) and the other five institutions in the state system have the ability to move forward in the future. The law allows the internal boards to set tuition, no more than 5% increase per year, with approval of the Oregon Education Investment Board (or the Higher Education Coordinating Commission), hire and fire presidents, and use bonding for projects. The board members, 11-15, will be appointed by the Governor who also will determine if the required faculty member has a voting right (a student must be appointed and has voting rights) and if a staff member will be appointed ex-officio. Funding

is the responsibility of the institution. The league's interest currently has to do with the cooperation and coordination of programs and services among the schools and interests of students and faculties. Now is an excellent time to be studying Oregon higher education.

O&C Counties

Our concerns about the functioning of local governments has led us to follow the fiscal crisis in several Oregon counties over the past several years as the combination of reductions in the federal timber payments coupled with the recession and lower property tax incomes have caused serious cuts in public safety and human services. The Legislature passed three measures which offer relief, if not permanent solutions to the problems. Lane County is one of the jurisdictions in possible need of assistance. The major piece gives the Governor the ability to declare a county in



fiscal crisis because it cannot provide a safe/secure level of public safety for its citizens. At that time, a plan will be put together to provide funds for public safety and the way to pay for it,

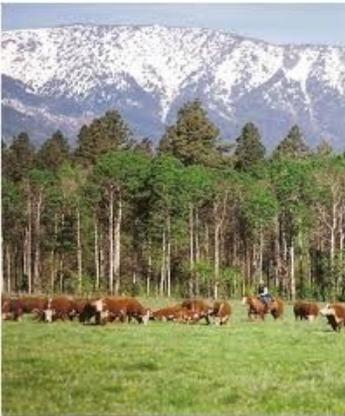
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both with state and local means. A second statute provides the Secretary of State with the authority to take over the elections function and provide for assessment and taxation procedures, considered essential by state law. A third bill continues the ability of impacted counties to use federal road dollars for sheriff patrols, first passed in 2012. Curry, Josephine, Lane and Douglas counties are among those in danger, particularly the first two.

Natural Resources

Many land use issues have



been addressed this session, some of them detrimental to Oregon's protection and overall land use and conservation system. The League was active in opposition to such issues as extended aggregate mining on high value farm land which ultimately led to keeping the current status. One success was the defeat of sludge gold mining in protected rivers which had been increasing due to bans

in California, Idaho and Washington.

Water rights, storage and the Columbia River also



brought League concerns and some opposition. Successful was the protection of Waldo Lake from motorized usage and the emergence of a bill to provide money for study and on-the-ground water storage projects looking at continuing climate change issues.

The Governor's 10 year Energy Plan received plenty



of attention but no final action by the Legislature.

Social Policy

One of the Governor's public safety priorities was *modification of Measure*



57 and a slowdown of the increasing burden of prison costs. The Public Safety Commission recommendations for changes were con-

sidered by the Legislature and several adopted. The revised measure adjusted prison time and parole violation time limits. Incentives for earned time in prison, transition and early discharge, resulting in some savings for the Department of Corrections that will be used for county corrections to provide services and treatment to reduce recidivism.

The *Department of Human Services budget* was



increased for the jobs program, and the employment related day care subsidies for employed parents will cover 9000 cases and additional funds will increase the child care provider rates. Also, the budget, increased with federal dollars, will include child welfare, vocational rehabilitation, aging and people with disabilities and developmentally disabled adults and children.

Supported programs and services include creation of a Youth Development Division, the Office of Child Welfare, Early Intervention and Youth Investment. The Department of Education budget includes the office of Deputy Superintendent and support for the State Board of Education and

oversight of K-12. The Oregon Education Investment Board budget pays for the Chief Education Officer (oversight of all Oregon public education), 11 staff for the 0-20 education system plan, and projects and studies, with a report to the 2014 session.

Last Minute Decisions



The Citizen Initiative Review Commission bill was in Ways and Means for months, finally coming out just in time to be passed. No reason was ever given as to why this privately funded entity continuation was sent to Ways and Means in the first place nor why the subcommittee on General Government didn't move it out

The worst defeat was the refusal of the Senate Rules committee to even hold a hearing on the *National Popular Vote Compact*. It was passed fairly early by the House, and despite continued requests from lobbyists, constituents, other legislators and outsiders, it died in committee.

THANK YOU LEAGUE OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

The League thanks those who have volunteered in the office during the past 12 months:

Lorraine Abbott, Flo Alvergue, Merle Bottge, Carol Brunje, Janet Calvert, Gayle Downing, Helene England, Lyn Fischrup, Nancy Francis, Laurie Granger, Elleen Levy, Pat McDaniels, Lilla McDonald, Anne Mehl, Eleanor Mulder, Kay Robinhold, Linda Roe, Veronika Walton, and Sally Weston

YOU can be part of this illustrious group. The League needs more volunteers to provide a welcoming presence in the office Monday and Thursdays, 11am to 1:30pm. Interested? Ask one of the regulars. Stop by the office when it is open.

Call Merle Bottge at 541-687-1777.

Merle Bottge

VOTER SERVICE - LAURIE GRANGER AND ELLEN MADDOX CO-CHAIRS

At the May board meeting League member Alice Davenport suggested that in preparation for fall elections we have available "Vote" lawn

signs. Alice researched local companies and suggested Towers Marketing. Updated prices, possible graphics and a sample sign with stakes were presented

at the June and July meetings. A decision on this project is expected at the August board meeting.



Please give this
to a friend



As a member of the League, you will receive the monthly newsletter from LWVLC (*Argus*), which has information about our monthly and unit meetings, and the quarterly newsletter from the Oregon League (*Voter*).

Mail the form and check payable to LWVLC to:

LWVLC
338 West 11th Ave, Suite 101
Eugene, OR 97401

League of Women Voters Lane County

Membership Form

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual | \$65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Household (Two people at the same address) | \$97.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Student | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual after February 1st | \$32 |

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Phone

Email (for League use only)

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CALENDAR

AUGUST

8, 9:30, Action Meeting

9, Noon to 1:30

U of O Law School, Knight Law Center, 1515 Agate Street
Senator Jeff Merkley
Sponsored by *LWVLC, Wayne Morse Center, and Oregon College Democrats.*
Attendance is free. Brown bag lunches pre-order deadline Aug. 2 at 1pm. <http://cityclubofeugene.org/>

21, 1:30 PM, Board Meeting

23, ARGUS deadline - midnight

SEPTEMBER

18, 1:30 PM, Board Meeting

19, Fall Luncheon, 11:30 Hilton (page 2)

***Our Mission**
The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

The League summer office hours
Monday and Thursday
11 am to 1:30 pm