

Recap: September 2022 Legislative Days

October 10, 2022

The following is a summary of legislative committee meetings viewed online by RDI staff, with particular emphasis on issues and potential legislation discussed which may have rural impact.

Joint Interim Committee on Gambling Regulation

Amanda Beitel of the Legislative Fiscal Office provided an overview of how **Oregon Lottery** dollars are distributed, and the myriad constitutional and statutory requirements that guide the purposes for which these funds are used. If you'd like to know if your community benefits from Oregon Lottery funds, her 25-minute presentation is available here:

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/mediaplayer/?clientID=4879615486&eventID=2022091013>

House Interim Committee on Economic Development & Small Business

Oregon Semiconductor Competitiveness Task Force: Governor Brown, Rep. John Lively, and Duncan Wyse (OR Business Council) explained the recommendations of this group related to competing for Oregon's share of the **\$280 billion in federal funding available over the next 10 years as part of the CHIPS Act**. Applications are due to the U.S. Department of Commerce in February, and will likely be distributed quickly. Task Force recommendations include targeted support to increase access to K-12 and higher education STEM programs & experiential learning, a research & development tax credit, toolkits to assist local governments with industrial land readiness, and an expedited permitting process achieved by adding more staff to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Oregon Broadband Expansion: Rep. Pam Marsh and Daniel Holbrook (Oregon Broadband Office) discussed the implementation of HB4072, which included provisions to prepare Oregon for competitive federal grants – an anticipated \$157 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and \$100 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Application preparation tasks include the creation of a Broadband Working Group, community and stakeholder listening sessions, draft rules & handbooks, hiring of staff, and mapping of existing broadband service across the state.

Rachel Maddox-Hughes of Sequoia Consulting described the regional Broadband Action Teams being formed to understand needs and formulate action plans and proposals. **The committee noted that the following counties are not yet participating in this broadband effort: Yamhill, Clackamas, Polk, Marion, Gilliam, Umatilla, Wheeler, Crook,**



Grant, and Harney. Because these teams are locally-led, local champions are being sought for these counties.

House Interim Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

Small-Scale Community Renewable Energy Study & Grant Programs: Rob Del Mar and Stephanie Boles from the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) talked about how the agency's grant programs are helping Oregon communities transition to clean, equitable renewable energy.

\$50 million in grants will provide direct benefits to communities across Oregon by improving energy resilience, creating local jobs, promoting economic development and reducing local energy costs. 50% of these grants are carved out to serve qualifying communities (communities of color, low income, tribal, rural, and coastal communities).

These grant programs are targeted to planning and constructing renewable energy and energy resilience projects, and funding is only open to public bodies (counties, tribes, municipalities, special districts).

ODOE awarded \$12 million in the first round of funding; an additional \$12 million will be available for the next round this fall. While a statewide outreach effort led to diversification of applications from around the state, ODOE noted that additional outreach is necessary to reach remote rural and coastal areas, and potential policy "tweaks" may be needed to help get small renewable projects over the line and accessible to all communities, especially those in rural places.

Making Energy Work Coalition: Bridget Callahan of Sustainable Northwest and Mike McArthur of Community Renewable Energy Association convened a policy committee that includes 13 Oregon counties to address community energy barriers and opportunities for renewable energy solutions. Specific opportunities identified by this committee for consideration in the 2023 session include a shared policy agenda that touches on energy siting, energy resilience, modernizing the Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA), workforce development, and renewable hydrogen. Oregon is experiencing increased natural disasters, extreme weather events and public safety power shut-offs that are causing disruptions to energy grids and the power supply, creating demand for energy storage and micro-grid development at scale and at community level.

Energy resilience for front-line, tribal, rural, and under-resourced communities is a priority for this coalition. While every county is asked to update their hazard mitigation plan every 5 years, and an energy resilience component has been added recently to those plans, ***these efforts must be supported by technical assistance and funding to overcome capacity and resource limitations.***



Presenters noted that support and direction from the state would ensure that Oregon is positioned to take advantage of federal funding opportunities, develop efficient mechanisms to deploy those dollars, and can do so in way that supports both rural workforce development & clean energy opportunities.

Senate Interim Committee on Health Care/House Interim Committee on Veterans & Emergency Management

These two committees hosted a variety of speakers in the health care and first responder field, providing information about the capacity challenges resulting from pandemic impacts on their workforces and systemic issues reflected in increased response times and a scarcity of available beds in care facilities. There was concern expressed that the upcoming fall viral season and any sort of mass casualty incident could place ongoing strain on these services, particularly in small communities and remote areas of the state.

There is a workforce domino effect, starting with the pandemic reductions in the number of students enrolled in health care and first responder training programs. Paramedic workforce shortages have resulted from workers accepting positions as hospital nurses, and rural nurse shortages are exacerbated by staff moving to larger urban hospitals for higher wages. There is a further impact with respect to response times, as police personnel must wait longer at a crisis scene for fire and emergency personnel, who in turn wait longer at hospitals for beds to open up, while hospitals are waiting for beds to open in short-staffed long term care facilities. The West Coast feels these shortages more acutely because our region has the fewest number of hospital beds per capita than anywhere else in the nation.

Dr. Raymond Moreno, Chief Medical Officer at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, described how a robust Adult Foster Care system can alleviate some of these pressures on hospitals and long-term care facilities, and Chief Charles Hanley of the Jackson County Fire District talked about how they've had hiring success by restructuring the traditional training model with an apprenticeship program described as "paycheck first, then on-the-job training, then continuing education" that has allowed them to hire 21 people over the last nine months. Most presenters agreed that systems change is required to recruit and retain the health care and first responder workforce in Oregon over the long term.

House Interim Committee on Revenue/Senate Interim Committee on Finance & Revenue

Mark Gharst, a Lobbyist with the League of Oregon Cities, and Art Fish, Incentives Coordinator at Business Oregon, presented an impact study of state property tax



incentives. Many of these programs' sunset dates will be considered as part of the upcoming 2023 session. ***As part of the presentation, it was noted that the need for incentives and the conditions of those incentives are different in urban and rural places, and that of the 76 designated Enterprise Zones in Oregon, 58 are in rural places*** (defined as outside urban growth boundaries). For more information, the full study can be found here:

https://www.oregon.gov/biz/Publications/Property_Tax_Incentives_Impact_Study.pdf

Senate Interim Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire Recovery/Senate Interim Committee on Veterans & Emergency Preparedness

SB 762 provided targeted funding to prevent and manage wildfire events in Oregon, with a focus on innovative approaches and building capacity. Mike Shaw, Fire Protection Chief for the Oregon Department of Forestry, and Mariana Ruiz-Temple, State Fire Marshal, provided a report on their progress in implementing the bill provisions and their intention to seek permanent program funding as part of the 2023 session.

Investments in the detection camera network, the addition of 450 fire fighters pre-positioned in high risk areas, and other improvements resulted in shortened response times and 97% of fires kept at 10 acres or less in 2022 to date.

Upcoming wildfire grant programs available as part of SB 762 include:

- The Oregon Fire Service Capacity Program is geared to help fire agencies hire fire fighters and prevention personnel; the grant program will roll out during October.
- \$18 million available to local governments and members of the public for projects related to creating defensible space to prevent and reduce the impact of wildfires. The application process is projected to open this winter.
- A government-to-government Tribal Summit will create a space for conversations between state fire officials and tribal governments to discuss their needs for wildfire prevention and management. Grants will be awarded to tribes by the end of this year.

Doug Grafe, Wildfire Programs Director for the Governor's Wildfire Programs Advisory Council and Andrew Stolfi, State Insurance Commissioner, provided information about the release of wildfire maps earlier this year. Senator Golden acknowledged the challenges of a desire for quick implementation with respect for the need for community input; a plan for increased community engagement is now in place, with a new draft map to be published in March 2023. A public comment period will follow, and a final map will be available in October 2023. ***Mr. Stolfi clarified that this new Wildfire Risk Map will not be used by***



insurers; insurance companies use their own mapping and data sources to determine wildfire risk.

Tucker Teutsch of the Firebrand Resiliency Collective and Emily Jane Davis of OSU Extension talked about their community-based work to educate residents about wildfire prevention, response, and recovery, including training volunteer Zone Captains and the implementation of a Citizen Fire Academy. ***Dr. Davis noted that changing behavior around complex topics requires intentional local dialogue, not just program delivery.***

Jeff Parker and Alicia Rabideau of the Northwest Youth Corps provided an update on the Community Wildfire Prevention Corps, a youth-focused workforce training and wildfire management program that has awarded \$9 million in grants to 11 organizations to help build defensible space for owners who are unable to afford or complete the work themselves. 400 youth will participate by the time the program ends in June 2023, and many are considering a career in wildfire management.

Senate Interim Committee on Housing & Development

Eviction Prevention: Sybil Hebb of the Oregon Law Center and Jason Miller of the Oregon Rental Housing Association discussed the expiration of pandemic initiatives to support renters in danger of eviction. They noted that 40% of Oregon households are renters, and the state has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the nation.

Homeless Services: Mike Savara of Oregon Housing & Community Services presented an update on the impact of CARES Act and other state investments to address homelessness in Oregon since 2020. He mentioned new Navigation Centers in Lane, Malheur, and Deschutes Counties and Project Turnkey sites statewide as examples of projects implemented to support the needs of the homeless population. The agency is requesting \$205.7 million for 2023-24, including funding for long-term youth rental assistance, shelter services, housing retention resources, and Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). A concern was raised about whether there has been dollars shifted from local community action agencies and housing authorities to fund statewide initiatives; Mr. Savara explained that the Task Force on Homelessness is requesting these dollars in addition to existing funds for local efforts.

Long-Term Housing Development: Sean Edging of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development (DLCD) provided an overview of the progress of the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis, and the implementation of related initiatives at all levels of government. He explained that a Housing Capacity Analysis determines need, while a Housing Production Strategy plans to meet that need – in the past, Oregon has focused more on the former than the latter. ***Mr. Edging recommended a shift from passive to active – a production-oriented approach.*** He also noted that state agencies who work in



housing would benefit from more coordination. Draft recommendations were published in August 2022; a final report will be available by the end of 2022. The draft report can be found here:

https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/UP/Documents/20220831_OHNA_Draft_Recommendations_Executive_Summary.pdf

House Interim Committee on Education

Tom Insko (Eastern Oregon University), Dana Young (Treasure Valley Community College), and Mark Browning (Blue Mountain Community College) provided an update about the Governor's Moon Shot for Equity initiative in Eastern Oregon. Five years of funding has been provided for these three institutions to work together to address educational attainment gaps by creating a comprehensive system of student care. ***President Insko noted that 77% of their students are considered part of an underserved population, and EOU has seen their non-white student enrollment double over the last 7 years. Dr. Young said 25% of their student population is Hispanic, but the regional K-12 student population is currently trending 75% Hispanic.***

EOU sees more transfer students from community colleges than incoming freshmen, which provides a compelling rationale to work collaboratively to create an ecosystem across institutions. The Moon Shot funding is being used to purchase Navigate technology to facilitate wrap-around services, to improve transfer pathways and academic maps, to provide change management and skill building in equity for all students, to track data to report measurable results, and to network with others building similar ecosystems across the country. ***As President Browning noted, "We have to rely on each other – there's no one else around."***

