

This week was slow as policy committees wrapped up the work on their bills and they await bills from the other chamber to get through the process. Most bills will be going to the Way and Means committee for budget work, so many of the policy committees will be looking for things to do, thus there will be many “informational meetings” on topics the chairs want to work on in the future. I see this as a positive development in the process. The short session was originally designed as a time to deal with emergencies, correct errors and rebalance the budget. Over the past few years that seemed to be forgotten and issues of major policy were run through without proper vetting of the issues. Hopefully this current practice will continue into future short sessions and lawmakers focus on the limited items which most Oregonians thought they voted for when approving the annual sessions.

As I reported last week, SB 1576 was the first major “gut and stuff” of the session. The bill was a study bill, which everyone knew would not be passed in that form. The committee added three new items to the bill, one of which had me add it to the list of measures to watch.

A court case late last year could have the effect of overturning the recreational immunity statutes which protect landowners, both public and private, who allow people to use their property for recreation. The court determined that a person walking on a trail in Newport on the way to the beach was not recreation but instead traveling, therefore the city can be sued for damages. While this case has not yet been decided if the city will be liable, it has created the situation that many cities were closing their parks and trails to protect them from potential lawsuits. This also applies to private landowners who allow access through their property by people for recreation. This amendment to SB 1576 adds waking, hiking and bike riding to the list of items covered by the recreational immunity law. In keeping with the thought of emergency issues, the committee chair also made this fix temporary so that the issue could be studied in depth and a permanent solution identified for a long-term fix. The bill is now waiting for a senate vote, and if passed, will likely have a much more difficult time in the house, as the trail lawyers are opposed and have more influence in the house.

HB 4007 and SB 1520 have also been added to the list. They both deal with wildfire settlements and how those are taxed. There doesn't appear to be any opposition and lawmakers heard testimony that in these settlements, landowners who had homes burned are only allowed to keep 25 to 30% of the settlements they receive due to the proceeds being subject to income taxes. This is both a state and federal issue but if the state allows the homeowners to not count insurance settlements as income, it will save them 10% that can be used to replace their homes. This would be a positive outcome for any homeowner who experienced this sort of tragedy.

Next week the policy committees will be closing and the focus for the remainder of the session will be the budget. The outcome of those discussions will determine if the session continues on a positive note settles into partisan bickering as so many in the recent past have ended.

HB	Position	Priority	Date Input	Assigned To	Category
4007	Monitor	4	2/22/24	Roger Beyer	P & C

[Bill](#)
[Info](#)

Summary: Creates an Oregon tax subtraction for amounts received in settlement of civil actions arising from wildfire. Allows an Oregon itemized deduction for wildfire-related legal fees paid by plaintiffs. Applies to amounts received and legal fees paid in all tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2020. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Status:

2/22/24 H - Public Hearing held.
2/5/24 H - Referred to Revenue.
2/5/24 H - First reading. Referred to Speaker's desk.

HB	Position	Priority	Date Input	Assigned To
4091	Monitor	4	2/1/24	Roger Beyer

[Bill](#)
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Summary: Establishes the Health Insurance Mandate Review Advisory Committee, staffed by the Legislative Policy and Research Director, to meet during interims between sessions of the Legislative Assembly to review any proposed measure sponsored by or submitted to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to health if the measure requires health insurance policies to reimburse specified health care providers or to reimburse the cost of a specific service. Specifies the membership of the committee and the type of review that the committee must undertake. Requires the committee to produce a report of its findings on each proposed measure no later than January 15 of the year in which the measure may be introduced or 15 days after a review is requested, whichever is later. Requires the director to report to the Legislative Assembly, by December 31, 2026, on the work of the committee and recommendations for legislation. Sunsets June 30, 2027. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Status:

2/14/24 H - Referred to Ways and Means by order of Speaker.
2/14/24 H - Recommendation: Do pass and be referred to Ways and Means.
2/12/24 H - Work Session held.
2/5/24 H - Public Hearing held.
2/5/24 H - Referred to Behavioral Health and Health Care.
2/5/24 H - First reading. Referred to Speaker's desk.

SB	Position	Priority	Date Input	Assigned To	Category
1520	Monitor	4	2/22/24	Roger Beyer	P & C

[Bill](#)
[Info](#)

Summary: Creates Oregon tax subtraction for amounts received in settlement of a civil action arising from wildfire. Applies to amounts received in tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2020, and before January 1, 2026. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Status:

2/22/24 S - Public Hearing and Work Session scheduled.
2/21/24 S - Informational Meeting held.
2/8/24 S - Public Hearing held.
2/5/24 S - Referred to Finance and Revenue.
2/5/24 S - Introduction and first reading. Referred to President's desk.

SB	Position	Priority	Date Input	Assigned To	Category
1576A	Monitor	3	2/16/24	Roger Beyer	P & C

[Bill](#)
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Summary: **Modifies provisions regarding disclosure of certain materials relating to consumer data investigations by the Attorney General. Provides for confidentiality of court records relating to certain settlements of minors' claims. Modifies provisions relating to recreational immunity and makes some of the changes temporary. Declares an emergency, effective on passage.**

Status:

2/22/24 S - Second reading.
2/21/24 S - Recommendation: Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)
2/19/24 S - Work Session held.
2/15/24 S - Work Session held.
2/12/24 S - Public Hearing held.
2/5/24 S - Referred to Judiciary.
2/5/24 S - Introduction and first reading. Referred to President's desk.