

BUDGET BALANCING IDEAS PROPOSED BY OTHER STATES

--Arizona has eliminated state assistance to local transportation departments for mass transit. Perhaps it is time for Oregon to stop spending hundreds of millions of dollars to subsidize expensive mass transit Light-Rail and Am-Trak projects that have failed to garner the support of those who powerful policymakers believe should be riding them.

--Arkansas has frozen most spending at Fiscal Year 2010 spending. With the huge reductions in Oregon's revenues, Oregon's General Fund revenue level is \$400 million lower than it was in 2005. Since Oregon did not fall into the Pacific Ocean before 2005, and its spending has increased by 46% since then, perhaps it is time for Oregon to retract the expansions in spending since 2005, and draft the 2011-13 State Budget accordingly.

--Nevada has cut spending by 10%, except for education which was cut 6.9%. Oregon's Governor cut current budgets by 9% after the \$526 million drop of revenue in the June Forecast. Today, the revenue dropped by an additional \$377.5 million. Substantial cuts will again be required to make it through the current biennium. Across the board cuts do not serve the best interest of Oregon citizens; they treat essential and non-essential programs the same. What is needed is to fully fund Oregon's most essential programs to ensure the safety of the public, to provide for the physical and health needs of those who absolutely cannot care for themselves, and to provide funding for innovative education that will result in high proficiency and student performance. The old strategy of throwing ever-increasing amounts of money at ever-expanding programs cannot be continued. More across-the-board cuts are not the solution to Oregon's long-term financial problems.

--California has proposed eliminating Medi-Cal health services for 48,750 new legal immigrants and 65,000 undocumented people for an estimated savings of \$118 million. It is time for Oregon to ensure that our own citizens are cared for before expending precious revenue on those who are illegally in our state. Although the federal government has sided with the Mexican government against states that seek to use their own law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws, perhaps Oregon's governor and legislature should review the 10th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is time for our elected leaders to stand up for Oregon citizens and Oregon sovereignty. There are an estimated 175,000 illegal persons living in Oregon. The costs in Oregon services and resources are enormous. Oregon would save millions of dollars by requiring identification and reasonable proof of legal residency before expending social services that should be reserved for legal Oregonians.

--Connecticut's governor proposed a \$3 co-pay for certain Medicaid enrollees and eliminating optional benefits such as eye-glasses and vision care for adults. It is time for Oregon to consider requiring Oregon Health Plan members to have some "skin-in-the-game." While advocates say even a small co-pay is unfair for the very poor, it would require them to think before rushing to see a doctor or dentist. The number of "no-show" patients having an OHP card is frustrating to health care providers. While we are at it, perhaps it is time to review the benefits offered and save money by covering only the most serious conditions. These changes would require federal government approval, but we must remember these are extreme times in which we live.

--Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare will be cutting 4% of its workforce, laying off 126 workers and closing nine of 29 offices for an annual savings of \$7 million. It is time to review Oregon's Department of Human Services and initiate the elimination of hundreds of middle manager positions while transitioning to a "self-management team" approach commonly used in private industry.

--New Jersey cut \$7.5 million in family planning funds. Perhaps it is time for Oregon to save the money being spent on elective abortions. Why should limited taxpayer funds be spent terminating the life of a baby when the mother's life is not in jeopardy? Most abortions are paid with private funds, and those that are not could be paid by Pro-Choice organizations or from a surcharge collected by abortion clinics. Elective abortions do not need to be paid by taxpayers, many of whom oppose the taking of such young and innocent lives.

--Washington eliminated 160 positions from its Medicaid program and has proposed cutting basic health plan coverage for 79,000 people. Oregon DHS is growing at an unsustainable rate. The number of DHS workers has doubled just since I have been in the legislature in 2003. The DHS proposed General Fund/Lottery Fund budget for 2011-13 increases by 47% (\$3.5 Billion to \$5.2 Billion). Such increases are clearly unsustainable and will force a complete evaluation of the populations covered, the magnitude of services, number of employees, and the mechanisms of delivery. There is no such thing as "too big to fail" in Oregon's budgetary future.

--Wisconsin and Minnesota are partnering to lower their prison meal expenses. They will begin offering "Taco Tuesday" and save 10 cents per meal (lowering the cost to \$1.14 per meal), resulting in a \$2 million annual savings. I'm sure my friend, Max Williams, the Oregon's Director of Corrections is looking for ways to partner with Washington, Idaho, Nevada and California and find ways to share equipment, utilize economy of scale in bulk purchasing, etc., thereby saving money for both states.

--Virginia is considering a change in deputy-to-inmate population ratios from 1 to 1,500 to 1 to 2,000 and thereby save \$25 million. Oregon's prison population continues to

grow and it is expensive to incarcerate each inmate. Every time we “tough-on-crime” voters cast a ballot in favor of longer sentences for crimes, we should remember that the price tag for incarceration is high. Oregon also has a very high percentage of criminals who are in mental wards because of a plea or finding of “not guilty by reason of insanity.” Once in a secured psychiatric facility—which can cost ten times the cost of doing time in prison—these inmates are often locked up for much longer than if they had merely “plead guilty to the crime and done their time.” Of course psychopaths must be put away in the State Mental Hospital, but Oregon needs to review how criminals, courts and district attorneys determine mental capability, how patients get into psychiatric-mental wards and what must occur for them to be released.

--Michigan Department of Corrections is conducting pilot programs to cut prison costs that are shaving 30% off in some locations. Hopefully, Oregon is thoroughly researching such programs in sister-states and will quickly adopt successful new ways of running our jails and prisons more economically.

--Kentucky proposed the release of 2,000 non-violent criminals for a savings of \$30 million. Oregon should be careful about this one, since protecting our citizens is a top priority of State government. Nevertheless, we should be more creative when dealing with Illegals who are inmates. Could they be deported or how about sending those law-breakers who are Illegally in Oregon at the time of their arrests to China to do their time for a fraction of the cost of keeping them in an Oregon prison. That would be one type of “out-sourcing” that I could support—and I would bet the rate of recidivism for those Illegals in Oregon would drop dramatically.

The above is only a sampling of hundreds of creative budget-saving ideas being considered across America—some of which may be adaptable to Oregon. Most of the above ideas have been gleaned from the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) website—available at <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=19999> .