



ity Chamber of Commerce
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Government Affairs & Public Policy March Meeting Notes

Speaker(s): N/A

Policy Discussion: Legislative Updates

- Please see the Updated Legislative Priorities attached.

Oregon State Chamber Web Call

- CAT Tax Exemptions – SB 707 & SB 125
 - 707 – **Pinned** reach out to Sen Meek and request an extension to the area of effect, for both rural and urban.
 - Proposed by Senator Mark Meek.
 - The Chamber agrees in support of SB 707.
 - Adam Khosroabadi mentioned that he can further investigate into the reasoning of being “Rural” specific and find the answer.
 - Laura mentioned that “Rural” refers to statewide other than just within Clackamas County.
 - The Committee agrees that the Chamber should continue focusing on these bills to push for universal coverage for both urban and rural areas.
 - 125 –
 - The Committee believes that the bill is not quite complete and will revisit at another time.
- Strike Unemployment Payments
 - SB 916 – will follow up with Sen Meek on understanding of support.
 - The Committee agrees in opposition of SB 916. They believe that the Chamber needs to take a strong stand against.
 - This will provide sever consequences in the long run for businesses.
- Waiver Liability
 - HB 3140 – will follow up with Sen Meek on understanding support.
 - The Committee agrees in support of HB 3140. With the strike of needed consultation on Climate Control.
- Transient Room Tax
 - HB 2977 –
 - The Committee agrees in opposition of HB 2977.
- Additional bills to watch:
 - SB 176 – Marijuana Usage and Regulations
 - SB 394 – CAT Tax use for PERS

State of the County

- The Chamber is looking to meet with the Commissioners and get something scheduled.

State of the Cities

- The event will be scheduled for April 16th. *More information to come.*

Upcoming:

- The Chamber will look to set up a meeting with Sen Mark Meek and other Senators that can help the Committee understand the proposed bills.
- The Chamber will be hosting "Chamber Day" at the Oregon State capitol on May 8th. *More information is to come.*

In-depth Summary

Committee Acting Chair Leads Discussion

In this meeting, Tina Irvine, the acting Chair of the Committee, led the discussion with various members from different organizations. They discussed their roles and responsibilities. Diana Helm, the Vice Chair, also participated in the meeting. Other members, including Laura Edmonds, an academic development manager for Clackamas County, and Mark Stehn, a member of the Chamber Board, were present either in person or online. The meeting focused on several bills that Laura had brought, and new challenges identified by Jay and Tina were discussed.

Structuring Legislative Initiatives Discussion

Tina initiated a discussion to structure the legislative initiatives more effectively. She broke down the initiatives into five overarching buckets: *Infrastructure and Development; Business and Economic Development; Workforce and Housing; Government and Legislative Process; and Public Safety and Services*. This structure was intended to help the committee identify which initiatives are most important and make progress on them. The Committee agreed that this structure would be helpful in keeping the meetings organized. Tina offered to share the breakdown with Zack and Jay for further discussion.

Oregon 'Cat Tax' Discussion Meeting

The discussion revolved around the 'CAT tax' imposed on companies for the privilege of doing business in Oregon. The team discussed *Senate Bill 707*, which aims to remove the CAT tax from rural pharmacy sales. However, there was a consensus that the exemption should be extended to all citizens in the state, not just rural areas. The team also discussed *Senate Bill 125*, which is related to healthcare services and aims to reduce the tax on these services. The team agreed to reach out to Senator Meek to express their support for the bill but also to advocate for extending the exemption to the metro area. The team also discussed the need for a more business-friendly environment and the importance of raising the minimum threshold for the cat tax.

Healthcare Bills and Unemployment Concerns

The Committee and Tina discussed several bills, focusing on healthcare services, patient care, insurance premiums, and unemployment benefits. They agreed that *Senate Bill 916*, which allows for emergency strikes and subsequent unemployment benefits, would have unintended consequences such as encouraging strikes and higher unemployment rates. They also discussed the downstream effects of these decisions and the need for a coalition of all chambers to sign on to this bill.

Waivers: Government Involvement and Business Owners

The meeting revolved around the topic of waivers and liability in recreational activities such as yoga, gym visits, and pickleball. There was a discussion about the potential for the government to step in and make decisions for business owners regarding waivers. The Committee explained that the goal was to allow waivers again, as they were nullified by the court. The discussion also touched on the implications of climate change on the insurance industry and the recreational industry. The group seemed to agree on the idea of personal accountability and the need for waivers.

Opposing Wildlife Tax Hike Proposal

The group discussed *House bill 2977*, an initiative to increase the state transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.5% and redirect the additional 1% to the newly renamed "Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund" sub-account. They express opposition to the bill, citing concerns about transparency, the disconnect between the tax source and its proposed use, and the potential connection to climate change initiatives. The group feels that if the tax were to be increased, it should support housing and infrastructure rather than wildlife preservation. They agree to oppose the bill, viewing it as an attempt to introduce a new tax under the guise of environmental protection.

CAT Tax and Industry Specific Bills

The Committee and Tina discussed their stance on *SB 707* and *SB 125*, agreeing that addressing the remaining industry-specific difficulties with the CAT tax before seeking an increase in the CAT tax exemption is necessary. They also agreed on opposing *HB 297*, stating it has little value. Laura mentioned there are more bills to review, including one that positions CAT tax for the next 10 years to cover PERS. Tina asked for an email with the complete list of bills which Laura agreed to send.

State Chamber Watch List Review

Laura shared a comprehensive watch list from the State Chamber that includes bills that they support or oppose, affecting business and taxes. Some bills are related to transit room taxes and forestry. Others aim to change the Constitution regarding motor vehicle tax and surplus revenue. Laura also mentioned a bill that could divert revenues from the corporate activity tax to the Public Employees Retirement System. The group decided to review the list carefully and decide which bills to prioritize for the next meeting.

Addressing Workplace Marijuana and Priorities

- The Committee and Tina discussed the challenges of marijuana use in the workplace and the need to address it. The Committee mentioned an upcoming meeting with a county commissioner to discuss the state of the county and the possibility of another state of the city event. Tina suggested inviting a sponsor of a contentious bill to gain their perspective and help determine the outcome. The committee also touched on the issues with the random ecology survey and the need to move money to other priorities.

Website Rebrand and Tariff Concerns

The Chamber mentioned that their website is undergoing a rebrand, and they will focus on county and state matters. They also discussed the upcoming "Chamber Day" at the Capitol on May 8th and the need to keep an eye on federal matters, particularly tariffs. Tina expressed concerns about the impact of tariffs on the cost of healthy food and the economic uncertainty it could create. Laura shared insights from conversations with agricultural and steel manufacturers, noting that the tariffs could make them more competitive. The group expressed great pride in being able to acknowledge differing perspectives and will explore pre-drafted letters from the Oregon State Chamber for correspondence. The Chamber offered to assist with any questions about the letters. The conversation ended with Tina adjourning the session.

2025 North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce Legislative
Priorities into broader discussion topics:

I. Infrastructure and Development:

- **Transportation:** Funding for I205, Sunrise Corridor, regional projects, maintenance, and capital needs.
- **Transit:** Expansion of transit services in underserved areas.
- **Wastewater:** Ensuring stable wastewater capacity.
- **Land Use/UGB:** Expansion and accessibility of land use.

II. Business and Economic Environment:

- **Taxation:** Preservation/expansion of small business tax credits, opposition to taxes not supported by the business community.
- **Regulation:** Pre-emption of local employment regulations, fostering a business-friendly regulatory climate, opposition to regulations that create disincentives.
- **Liability:** Opposition to increased damage awards for liability and medical lawsuits, protecting businesses from personal liability.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Protecting business operations during emergencies.
- **Tourism:** Supporting tourism initiatives.
- **SAIF Funds:** Opposing re-allocation of SAIF surplus funds.

III. Workforce and Housing:

- **Workforce Housing:** Availability and affordability (not rent controlled).
- **Workforce Education and Training:** Prioritizing funding for community colleges.
- **Employment Regulations:** Opposing restrictions on employers' ability to provide a safe work environment.

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IV. Government and Legislative Process:

- **Legislative Process:** Advocating for the intended use of short sessions, ensuring public testimony for new laws and regulations.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Legislators seeking cost containment before new taxes, geographically equitable distribution of public spending.
- **Campaign Finance:** Campaign finance restrictions to create a level playing field.
- **Candidate Endorsements:** Endorsing candidates and measures that reflect the Chamber's legislative efforts.

V. Public Safety and Services:

- **Healthcare:** Supporting healthcare legislation supported by providers.
- **Public Safety:** Working with public safety officials to enhance business safety.
- **Alternative Fuels:** Retaining clean and affordable alternative fuel sources.
- **Tolling:** opposition to Tolling legislation.
- **Carbon tax:** opposition to carbon tax legislation that creates excessive cost burdens.