



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

1300 NW Wall Street, Bend, Oregon
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FOR RECORDING STAMP ONLY

DESCHUTES COUNTY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

8:00 AM

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026

ZOOM MEETING

A legislative work session was held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.
via Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform.

Deschutes County Attendance:			
x	Commissioner Phil Chang, Chair	x	Nick Lelack, County Administrator
	Commissioner Anthony DeBone, Vice Chair	x	Erik Kropp, Deputy County Administrator
x	Commissioner Patti Adair	x	Whitney Hale, Deputy County Administrator
	Kristie Bollinger, Property Manager	x	Tim Brownell, Director Solid Waste
x	Sara Crosswhite, Director 9-1-1	x	Susan Dejoode, Director Human Resources
	Steve Dennison, County Clerk	x	Chris Doty, Director Road Department
	David Doyle, Legal Counsel		Charles Fadeley, Justice of the Peace
x	Stephen Gunnels, District Attorney		Peter Gutowsky, Director Community Development
x	Holly Harris, Director Health Services		Jeff Curtis, Director Fair & Expo
	Deevy Holcomb, Director Community Justice		Heather Kaisner, Director Public Health
	Sean Kirk, Manager Veteran's Services	x	Bill Kuhn, Treasurer
x	Tom Kuhn, Public Health Program Manager		Scot Langton, Assessor
x	Tania Mahood, Director Information Technology	x	Elizabeth Pape, Internal Auditor
x	Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager	x	Lee Randall, Director Facilities

	Kim Riley, Senior Assistant Legal Counsel		Ty Rupert, Sheriff
x	Robert Tintle, Chief Financial Officer		Ryan Dunning, Management Analyst Property Management
x	Will Groves, Planning Manager		Heather Herauf, Procurement Manager
	Daniel Kieffer, Budget & Financial Planning Analyst		Zachary Neeman, Information Security Manager
	Jeff Price, Business Manager DCSO		Cody Smith, Assistant Director Road Department
x	Shannon Brister-Raugust, Director Behavioral Health	x	Kim Katchur, Director Communications
x	Angie Powers, BOCC Administrative Assistant	x	Aimee Burroughs, Health Services Administrative Assistant
Others Present:			
x	Doug Riggs, Director NW Policy Advocates		Corey Barber, Outreach Director NW Policy Advocates

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Chang called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

2. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner DeBone was attending the Central Oregon Builder's Association Builder's Perspective Breakfast this morning, so he was unable to attend this Legislative Update.

Commissioner Adair requested an update on **SB 1517**, as it relates to ski resort liability.

Commissioner Chang requested an update on **SB 1540**, related to wildfire and homeowners' insurance.

3. Updates from NW Policy Advocates

Doug Riggs provided an update, stating that the end of session is 36 hours away.

All committees are now closed. Despite speculation due to some controversial bills, a walkout did not occur. The gas tax referendum (**SB 1599**) was moved from the November to the May ballot, and House Republicans will file legal action. The gun bill, **HB 4145**, was heavily modified and allowed to pass.

The battery producer responsibility bill, **HB 4144**, championed by Rep. Levy, will be on the Senate floor this afternoon.

HB 4134, which would increase the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) by 1% to go towards wildlife conservation and wolf depredation, is moving forward.

Related to recreational liability, **SB 1593**, which covered a broad range of recreational operators, did not move forward. An amendment to **SB 1517** was adopted, providing a waiver of certainty protection from lawsuits. Subsequently, **SB 1517** is moving, and Riggs credited Rep. Levy as a key player.

SB 1544, which designates Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) as the qualified entity for Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) monies to pass through, is advancing. This bill was drafted by Sen. Broadman.

The "Spartacus Bill" is moving forward. This bill, **HB 4121**, reforms emergency planning and streamlines the chain of command. It establishes a plan for six separate regional sites (DPSST, CORE3, and four others) for regional emergency response training.

Despite Riggs' prediction, very little related to transportation and the transportation budget transpired this session. Instead, secret negotiations took place to balance ODOT's budget by:

- freezing ODOT staffing by leaving several vacancies unfilled,
- eliminating an expensive Highway 58 project,
- cutting Connect Oregon funding from \$90 million to \$52 million, and
- eliminating Safe Routes to Schools projects.

With regards to the overall state budget, there were no large cuts to existing programs, and very little new funding. The Terrebonne Sanitary project received \$2.14 million. Additionally, the OSU Cascades campus health center received funding.

In an effort to keep the Trailblazers in Portland, \$365 million in state bonding authority went towards purchasing a portion of the MODA Center. However, there was no funding for additional shelter beds, substance use and abuse treatment for youth, or behavioral health workforce issues.

Commissioner Chang expressed his disappointment over the time and energy poured into arguing over the transportation referendum being on the May or November ballot. Impacts related to Safe Routes to Schools and Connect Oregon projects will hurt Deschutes County. The impacts of reductions in service and quality of service will be felt, and a DMV hiring freeze means longer lines. Commissioner Chang emphasized the importance of the legislature sustainably funding basic ODOT maintenance over the long term.

Commissioner Chang spoke about the interaction between legislation and ballot measures, with a dynamic in which they are canceling each other out. Riggs concurred, noting the trend of less legislative compromise, highlighting transportation as a prime example. This dynamic is fueled by a supermajority on either side.

Riggs reported that **HB 4148**, which allows TLT to be used for resiliency grants for restaurants and lodging businesses, is moving forward and it appears that it will pass. Responding to Commissioner Chang, Robert Tintle commented that TLT allocations to VCO are determined during the annual budget process. Commissioner Chang suggested consideration of a long-term Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with VCO moving forward, reflecting the County's intent in an uncertain climate.

Responding to Commissioner Chang, Riggs reported that the wildfire homeowners' insurance bill, **SB 1540**, is not moving forward.

Responding to Holly Harris, the telehealth technical fix bill, **HB 4070**, passed yesterday on the House floor.

4. Review Bill Tracker Report by Department

Jen Patterson highlighted some bills from the bill tracker report, noting there is nothing new on the report and each bill on the report has been reviewed, with the Board's priority and position listed.

Riggs reported that **HB 4130**, which allows property tax special assessment for land under processing facilities, is moving forward.

Tintle reported that the penny bill, **HB 4178**, will pass and the County will likely see a related policy in the future.

Tom Kuhn provided an update on the nicotine bill, **SB 1571**, as it appears that it will pass. This bill adds a definition of "nicotine" and expands the definition of "tobacco products" to include nicotine pouches.

Riggs noted the only reason the state's budget wasn't as dismal as anticipated was because corporate income tax revenues from stock sales were up despite personal income tax revenues being down.

Riggs commended Central Oregon's legislative delegation, including but not limited to Sen. Broadman and Rep. Levy. They worked very well with Riggs and Northwest Policy Advocates. Commissioner Chang credited Sen. Broadman's work on the

Revenue Committee, for shoring up holes in the state's budget by decoupling the state income tax code from the federal income tax code, saving \$3 million.

Next Meeting: Patterson and Riggs will present a recap of the short session to the Board at a regular upcoming BOCC meeting, date yet to be determined.

Adjourn: Chair Chang adjourned the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Angie Powers, Administrative Assistant