



Oregon State Legislature

April 18, 2023

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Dan Rayfield
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Rob Wagner
President of the Senate

Dear President Wagner & Speaker Rayfield:

With approximately 70-days remaining until the Constitutional Sine Die, and with major legislation now being moved through the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, our Caucuses renew their joint call for reform to the legislative process permeating each chamber.

Under our current system, by referring matters to Ways and Means, legislation is automatically removed from being heard in the opposite Chamber's policy committee(s).

As illustrative examples, we highlight three bills which, by receiving a subsequent referral to Ways and Means, did not receive a full policy hearing in the opposite chamber. First, House Bill 2001, which was identified as priority by the Governor and both Majority parties, only received a policy hearing in the House. Second, House Bill 2005, which is a legislative priority for the Majority, received a policy hearing in the House Judiciary Committee, then received a fiscal note, subsequent referral to Ways and Means, and now will not be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Similarly, House Bill 2002, a Majority priority, will not be heard in the Senate Health Care Committee due to its referral to Ways and Means.

Senate and House Republicans participated in good faith in the workgroup following the 2021 Session that was tasked with exploring and resolving this issue. While we acknowledge the genuine interest expressed in the workgroup by *some* legislative Democrats, others were, in our view, not only less sanguine but demonstrably obstructionist to any reform.

Process reform does not require a dramatic overhaul to the underlying system. Rather, a prudent, common-sense solution can be reached if the parties approach the discussion in good faith. The current system is unfair and beneath the dignity of the people's Assembly.



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Prior leadership has claimed that a solution is simply untenable. We disagree. Instead, in our view, prior leadership have been unwilling to change the status quo for fear that their hand-picked policy preferences will suffer from additional scrutiny by policy committees and public hearing.

You both have the authority and power to introduce modest, but substantive changes to the legislative process which will increase transparency, accountability, and efficiency – all core tenets to your stated legislative leadership goals.

As such, we jointly request the creation of a workgroup of representatives from Democratic and Republican leadership, as well as non-partisan staff offices, empowered with the authority to recommend changes to the legislative process and for implementation of such changes to take effect by the 2024 Short Session. Should this reasonable, good faith request be ignored, Republicans in both Chambers will have no choice but to introduce priority legislation that requires the formation of such a workgroup.

Irrespective of political party, the people of Oregon have entrusted and empowered each of us to work in their interest. This includes the implementation of a transparent, well thought out approach and reform to the legislative process which ensures confidence and faith in our legislative system. We are confident that our proposal will be the first-step in achieving that goal.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Vikki Breese-Iverson
Republican Leader
Oregon House of Representatives

Tim Knopp
Republican Leader
Oregon State Senate

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