

Lane County Legislative Priorities

ORS 198.940

Amending ORS 198.940 (Special Districts) such that County Service Districts that are no longer necessary because they've fulfilled their initial purpose can be dissolved without the need for an election. The Lane County Wastewater Service District was formed in 1978 to provide funding for the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission, an ORS 190 organization. Its bonds were paid off in 2002. With the elimination of the Lane Boundary Commission in 2007 this district is now a bit more problematic in terms of maintaining its boundaries. Elections are expensive, and it seems silly to have to hold one in order to dissolve something that is all but defunct.

ORS 293.560

Lane County is closely following the development of the Western Climate Initiative and federal cap and trade proposals. Forestry offsets appear to be "legitimized" as part of both regional and national cap and trade offset language, and thus we think that the Forest Service or BLM may find it alluring at some point to sell carbon offsets from federal forests. If they do, we think that any revenue realized from those lands for offsets ought to be shared with counties, as are federal timber revenues. Obviously, this may largely be a federal issue in terms of enabling legislation, but there is a bit of ORS involved for how federal monies are distributed to counties within ORS 293.560.

ORS 431.170 and 431.375

The general legislative policy for local public health services is that the state, in partnership with county governments, should provide basic public health services through county administered programs (ORS 431.375). The state is not providing sufficient funding to the counties to perform public health obligations. In addition to this underfunding, the state's position that it can take over if county public officials fail or refuse to administer or enforce public health services or laws and, bill the county for additional state expenses to take over these functions (ORS 431.170). The proposed legislative changes would clarify the original intent that the counties administer public health programs and laws "to the extent funds are made available through the state" and would protect the counties from being required to pay the state to instead perform these functions when the state has not provided them sufficient funding.

ORS 246.179

The Lane County elections division came under criticism for a paper vote-by-mail ballot that required extra postage due to its weight. The extra weight came from the length of the ballot, which was necessary due to the number of state and local measures crowding the general election. This is at least partially due to the fact that cities and districts do not pay their apportioned costs of general elections. ORS 246.179 requires that counties pick up all those costs. At the least, counties should be able to charge cities and districts their fair share of apportioned costs for the general election, as is the practice for other elections.