

75th OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY - 2009 Regular Session
STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation

MEASURE: SB 849 A
CARRIER: Sen. Metsger

REVENUE: No revenue impact
FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed
Vote:	4 - 0 - 1
Yeas:	George, Schrader, Starr, Metsger
Nays:	-
Exc.:	Verger
Prepared By:	Jim Stembridge, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	4/8, 4/20, 4/22

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs State Library to administer statewide audio newspaper service. Directs the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to transfer to the State Library Donation Fund \$70,000 for the 2009-2011 biennium from the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) for the purpose of funding the service. Declares an emergency, effective July 1, 2009.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for stable funding for audio newspaper service
- Number of participants in the program and the benefits they derive from the program
- National Federation of the Blind Newsline service details and 2003 national grant
- Telephone and Internet availability
- Services currently funded by the PUC-administered Residential Service Protection Fund
- Number of other states using similar funding mechanism
- Other worthy services in need of funding
- Possibility of including southern and eastern Oregon newspapers

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND: The Oregon State Library currently offers Talking Book and Braille Services (TBABS), but does not currently include newspapers. The service is available, through computer download, to persons who are unable to read standard print without aids or devices other than regular glasses; persons who have a visual acuity of 20/200 or less with glasses; persons who are physically unable to hold a book or turn a page; and persons who have a medically documented reading disability (<http://www.oregon.gov/OSL/TBABS/index.shtml>).

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) newspaper service, called NFB-NEWSLINE®, provides access to over 230 newspapers (including several in the Spanish language) free of charge, including the *Oregonian*, the *Statesman Journal*, and the Oregon Associated Press newswire, to those unable to read newspapers. The service is available through telephones or over the Internet (<http://www.nfbnewsline.org>). Although individual subscriptions are free, state-sponsors are sought.

The Oregon Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) assures that adequate and affordable residential telephone services are available to all Oregonians. The RSPF is supported by a tax, currently \$0.09, applied to the monthly bill of each subscriber who has telephone or cellular services. Three assistance programs are currently financed under the RSPF: the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP), the Telecommunication Devices Access Program (TDAP), and the Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service (OTRS).

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.