

**2009 Regular Legislative Session**  
**FISCAL ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION**  
**Prepared by the Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office**

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**MEASURE NUMBER:** SB 849

**STATUS:** A Engrossed

**SUBJECT:** Requires the Public Utility Commission to fund and the State Library to administer a statewide audio newspaper service telecommunications program for individuals who are blind or print-disabled

**GOVERNMENT UNIT AFFECTED:** Public Utility Commission, State Library, Oregon Commission for the Blind

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**DATE:** April 24, 2009

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	<u>2009-2011</u>	<u>2011-2013</u>
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>		
<b>Services and Supplies – Other Funds</b>		
Public Utility Commission (Residential Service Protection Fund)	\$ 70,000	
Oregon Commission for the Blind (Donations)	\$ (23,000)	
State Library (Donations)	\$ (24,400)	

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2009

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANDATE:** This bill does not affect local governments' service levels or shared revenues sufficient to trigger Section 15, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

**ANALYSIS:** This measure requires the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to make a one-time transfer of \$70,000 Other Funds for the 2009-11 biennium from the Residential Service Protection Fund to the State Library Donation Fund for the purpose of administering a statewide audio newspaper service telecommunications program to be provided free of charge to individuals who are blind or print-disabled. The bill authorizes the State Library to establish rules for the program. PUC and the State Library are directed to adopt an interagency agreement governing the transfer of funds.

Since 2006, the State Library, the Oregon Commission for the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind, Oregon Chapter have partnered to use donated funds to fund Newsline for blind and print-disabled Oregonians. Newsline is an on-demand newspaper service which allows blind or print disabled people to hear the text of newspaper articles, magazines and television listings over the telephone. Currently, these three agencies use donations to fund this service. The State Library and the Oregon Commission for the Blind are state agencies. The National Federation of the Blind, Oregon Chapter is an independent entity.

Senate Bill 849 would shift funding responsibility for Newsline for the 2009-11 biennium from these three agencies to the PUC. If this measure passes, the State Library, Talking Book and Braille Services, would continue to make an in-kind contribution of staff time to maintain the user database and to promote Newsline to potential new users of the service under an interagency agreement with the PUC. The Oregon Commission for the Blind and the State Library would use savings (an estimated \$23,000 and \$24,400 in donations respectively) to fund other needed enhancements to their services for blind and print-disabled Oregonians. The bill does not address funding for Newsline after the 2009-11 biennium.

Funding for the \$70,000 will come from the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) surcharge fee. By statute, PUC can increase the surcharge to a maximum of \$0.35. The current rate is \$0.09 cents. The Legislative Fiscal Office notes that if this bill passes, the RSPF surcharge fee may increase.