



SID LEIKEN

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DATE: March 15, 2012
TO: Senate Committee on Finance & Revenue
RE: HB 2870, relating to local tobacco taxation

Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee:

The Lane County Board of Commissioners is in support of HB 2870A. It lifts the local pre-emption on tobacco taxation, and directs at least 40% of any revenue so-raised to be spent on tobacco cessation and mental health and addiction services or programs.

Both those program areas are worthy recipients of tax revenue, and both need it. Here are examples of how Lane County could spend additional revenue related to this measure:

- Tobacco cessation
Just this morning OPB reported on a story out of Lane County where the CCO is training its staff on tobacco cessation techniques, and specifically targeting those techniques on pregnant women. Forty percent of women of child bearing age on the Oregon Health Plan smoked cigarettes and 32 percent of them continued to smoke while they were pregnant. The health related impacts amount to \$1M for neonatal care. Applying resources to cessation programs will improve health and reduce costs.
- Mental health and addiction services
Sobering services (Buckley House) were almost cut from the county's budget last year, and now the City of Eugene is threatening to cut funding for CAHOOTS, a program between Eugene and the White Bird Clinic. Without these services, the alternative for local police is to deliver intoxicated individuals to the Lane County Jail, or to one of the emergency rooms at the local hospitals. Both of these are far and away more expensive than providing money for these safety net services. Applying resources to addiction services will reduce crime and and reduce costs.

HB 2870A puts a revenue tool in local hands, and that revenue could be used to fund essential services that are otherwise at risk. From my perspective, HB 2870A should be defined as a county assistance bill. If passed, it will become a key component of how Lane County examines returning its public safety system to provide basic criminal justice in Lane County. We urge your support.