

It seems the Capitol Renovation Project has been getting a little more attention recently. That's good even though some of the attention indicates we have work to do.

We knew all along that there would be reluctance by some because of the cost of the project or being dislocated from the Capitol Building for a lengthy period or their belief that public schools should be seismically retrofitted first – all legitimate concerns.

What I've learned in over a decade of involvement in the project is that it is truly an expensive project at about \$337 million, but that is not out of line with similar projects around the country or even right here in Oregon. The project will not become less expensive with time. We should act now while the construction industry is looking for projects, while many in our work force are still looking for jobs and while bond rates remain favorable. The Capitol Building is the only State building for which the Legislature has total responsibility. The building is over seventy-five years old and needs work. But, more importantly, we have all seen enough information by now to realize the building is unsafe in terms of its ability to withstand a significant seismic event. I, for one, am unwilling to simply roll the dice as to whether the building will be occupied by employees, public officials, school kids and others during our next earthquake. I am likewise unwilling to guess what the Richter scale is going to say – 5.0, 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0? I want to know that, as a concerned citizen and taxpayer, I have met my responsibility.

With regard to being dislocated from the Capitol Building for over three years, it has been determined to be the most efficient, cost effective and safest way to proceed with this very complex project. Delaying the project will simply delay the inconvenience. Somebody someday is going to deal with it. Shouldn't we step up, accept the responsibility and get the job done?

How we deal with the seismic retrofitting of our public school (and also public safety) buildings is a high priority and somewhat daunting challenge. There are over 2000 public school buildings and nearly 1000 public safety buildings in Oregon. While the primary responsibility for these buildings lies with the local taxing districts, it is certainly reasonable to look to the State for help. To that end, the Legislature has previously created a program to assist local government and school districts with the cost of seismic retrofits. Currently, there are proposals from legislators in both political parties to significantly increase the financial support available in that program. As with the OSCRP, primary funding for this program is through the sale of bonds. There are, of course, other worthwhile legislative proposals requiring the sale of bonds. The State of Oregon, thankfully, is limited on the amount of its bonded indebtedness. So, all these many worthwhile programs must compete to be included in the Legislative Session's Capital Construction Bill. Since most of these projects, and especially the public schools, are long-term, it seems to me the responsible approach would be to formulate a Capital Construction package that

accommodates the OSCR, the public schools/public safety buildings and other priorities determined by the Legislature on a structured long-term basis. It shouldn't be a question of all or nothing for either the public schools or the OSCR. A responsible Capital Construction package can and should be done.

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