

## **2013 Legislature half into the 160-Day Grind**

By: Shawn Miller, ORHA Lobbyist and Jim Straub, ORHA Legislative Director

2013 is an odd legislative year which means a long 160-day session that starts on February 1<sup>st</sup> and will adjourn around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. In comparison, both the 2003 and 2005 sessions were over 200 days. However, Oregon has a much longer session than our neighbors from the north and east with Idaho already adjourned this session and Washington wrapping up soon. However, California is a full-time legislature much like Congress so they work much longer than Oregon.

The 2013 Legislature is still looking for its identity. It's nearly half over and much of the big issues are still to come. Public employee retirement system (PERS) reform, balancing the budget, taxes, criminal justice reform, and even Section 8 housing are still priority issues left to be considered in the next 3 months by the Democrat-controlled legislature.

Since the Democrats took control of the House by a clear 34-26 majority, the Senate has proclaimed itself as the "moderate" chamber with its tight 16-14 Democrat majority. This means the Senate will be the "killing field" of bills that are muscled through the House because of the strong majority. It only takes one Democrat joining with the Republican minority to kill a bill. And this is exactly the strategy of most business organizations facing an uphill climb on issues in the House—focus on the Senate. With that said, the Senate will require a few key partisan votes to adjourn this session.

ORHA is tracking and lobbying on several bills this session that would affect rental owners. The biggest bills for ORHA this session are Senate Bill 91, the landlord tenant omnibus bill, and House Bill 2639, the section 8 "housing choice" bill pushed by Speaker of the House Tina Kotek (D-Portland).

### **Senate Bill 91**

#### **Landlord Tenant Omnibus Bill**

#### **Position: Support**

I'm pleased to announce that the Landlord Tenant Coalition has reached agreement on moving a Coalition bill through the Legislature this session. It is currently known as Senate Bill (SB)91, and you can follow its progress on the internet at [www.oregon.gov](http://www.oregon.gov) (click on the "Legislature" link). There were no significant changes to the bill since our last update, except a last addition that will allow a tenant in a dwelling in foreclosure to terminate a fixed term tenancy early with proper notice. I will be available to testify in support of SB91 on the next legislative work session on the bill on Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **HB 2639**

#### **Section 8 "Housing Choice" Bill**

#### **Position: Neutral (originally opposed)**

The Housing Choice “Section 8” bill also continues to work its way forward. At our last meeting, the Oregon Rental Housing Association Board voted to move our position on this bill from “opposed” to “neutral”. This vote was in response to several key changes that Speaker Kotek made in the bill following stakeholder recommendations. Most importantly, Speaker Kotek agreed to include the Landlord Mitigation Fund we recommended in the amount of \$5,000 per tenancy. This fund would reimburse landlords for damages caused by Section 8 tenants in their units.

Also now included is a statewide Advisory Committee, made up of landlords and other stakeholders, who will ensure that the program follows good policy and that landlords’ voices are heard. We originally recommended to Speaker Kotek that the Mitigation Fund be funded up to \$10,000 per tenancy. The ORHA board has also voted to move our position on this bill from “neutral” to “supportive” IF the Landlord Mitigation Fund is funded at \$10,000 per tenancy and if the bill contains an automatic sunset (i.e., the program will be terminated) if funding for the Mitigation Fund never materializes or is eliminated for some reason.

As always, we’ll keep you updated here about the progress of landlord-related bills through the Legislature this session. I always welcome feedback from ORHA members. Please contact your local ORHA/ROA organization’s legislative representative for more information.