



The Capitol Granger

Regular news from your Grange lobbyist

State revenue department invites Grange to aid rule making on tax bill

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While the Oregon State Grange focused much of its energy this year on Senate Bill 181 and other bills, another less sinister property tax bill wound its way through the legislature. Both the House and Senate broadly approved House Bill 3453 late in the term.

The bill didn't pose the risk of the extra, annual reporting requirements for charities that SB 181 did. In fact, the idea behind HB 3453 was to make it easier for nonprofits that lease property to set up a property tax exemption to go along with the lease. That could save them hundreds or thousands of dollars per year.

The bill's only supporters in legislative committee hearings were commercial real estate associations. Nonprofits, naturally, didn't line up to oppose the bill. In fact, no one submitted opposing testimony, although 13 out of 90 legislators voted against it.

What's really important, though, isn't what the bill was about, or what twists and turns it took on its journey through the adoption process. What's more important is what happened after the governor signed it on July 6.

In early August, the Oregon Department of Revenue emailed a select group of nonprofits to solicit input about rule changes that the department was considering. In making the changes, a revenue staffer said the department wanted to ensure that statewide administrative rules that county assessors follow met the intentions of legislators in passing HB 3453.

The staffer included the Oregon State Grange among the group from which she invited input.

"This isn't a public hearing," she later wrote. "It's just a stakeholder group meeting."

As with eventually defeating a bill that has seen broad support early in the legislative session (as the Grange did with SB 181), being specifically invited by a state agency to give input is not altogether common. It often comes as the result of careful, repeated messaging to government officials, and especially legislators.

That the Department of Revenue included the state Grange on its list of stakeholders is evidence of the hard work that many Grangers have done. Those who have helped should feel very proud of this accomplishment. Keeping the name and the collective values of the Grange at the forefront of legislators' minds will continue to be important to receiving more such invitations in coming years.



Upcoming legislative events

Aug. 23: State revenue forecast released.

Sep. 18-21: Interim legislator meetings at Capitol.

Nov. 13-16: Interim legislator meetings at Capitol.

Nov. 29: State revenue forecast released.

Please email your comments or questions to govaffairs@orange.org. I'm also happy to arrange a visit to your grange as time permits.