



CAPITOL COMMENTS

February 16, 2021

A Pandemic, Ice Storms, and 4000 Bills ... Oh My!

The 2021 Oregon Legislature is off to a unique start as we enter the second month of the session. As reported previously, almost all legislative business has been conducted remotely given the COVID-19 pandemic. Hearings have been held online as interested parties testify about the pluses and minuses of proposed legislation. The move to virtual hearings has not been without its challenges. Technology has, at times, presented challenges for legislators and constituents alike. Each chamber has been holding floor sessions once a week to introduce bills but have not yet taken action on bills that have been voted out of committee. This is going to lead to a substantial bottleneck of bills when regular floor sessions take place.

As if the pandemic weren't enough, much of the upper Willamette Valley, including Salem, was brought to a standstill over the past weekend as the region was blanketed in ice and snow. [Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians in the Willamette Valley](#) were left without power or internet access, some of whom are still awaiting the restoration of service as of this writing. The storm forced the cancellation of legislative business on Monday and Tuesday of this week, and it is unclear what hearings or floor sessions will take place during the remainder of the week.

To add to the already unprecedented nature of the session, Speaker of the House **Tina Kotek** (D-Portland) [told the Oregonian that there are approximately 4,000 bills](#) that are set to be introduced this session. About 2,100 bills have been introduced thus far in 2021, including OBA's proactive legislative agenda (more below). By way of comparison, there



are usually 2,800 to 3,000 bills introduced during a normal six-month legislative session in Oregon. While fewer than 50 percent of introduced bills receive any serious consideration during a six-month session, let alone pass into law, a jump to 4,000 bills is a substantial increase. I guess we now know what legislators were doing during the lockdown in 2020.

Speaking of Billageddon, there has been a wide variety of measures introduced already this session, many of which would add extra costs and burdens on the business community, including banks. While the banking industry itself is not in the crosshairs like some other industries, there are still plenty of bad bills for us to address. These bills would, for example, reinstitute a residential foreclosure moratorium ([House Bill 2009](#)), create publicly-owned banks ([House Bill 2696](#), [House Bill 2743](#), and [Senate Bill 339](#)), and prohibit banks from charging fees to cash checks ([House Bill 2356](#)), to name a few. OBA's government relations team is well-positioned to address these ill-conceived bills.

OBA Priorities Set for Hearings This Week

While things have been slow-moving overall in the 2020 state legislative session, we were successful in getting a hearing and work session on our bill to tighten up a couple of provisions in the Oregon Bank Act ([Senate Bill 210](#)). The bill passed out of committee unanimously and awaits further action on the Senate floor, hopefully, in the coming days. OBA's government relations team is also working on scheduling hearings for our other bills that include protections for banks related to the sales of securities ([Senate Bill 203](#)), technical changes to the Unclaimed Properties Act ([Senate Bill 209](#)), and an exemption from the corporate activity tax for interest income on loans made to small businesses ([House Bill 2268](#)).

OBA Updated Top 20

We have updated our Top 20 list of bills. The Top 20 list can be reviewed by [clicking here](#) or by clicking the button in the upper right-hand corner of this email. Remember, the Top 20 is a list of those bills likely to have a major impact on the banking industry and/or a significant political impact. This is a fluid list and will change as additional bills of importance are introduced, amended or die during the course of the session.

Not All Bills Are Created Equal

While the OBA government relations team focuses our attention on the bills that impact banking, there are, from time-to-time, bills introduced that catch our attention having nothing to do with banking that either raise an eyebrow or bring about a chuckle. Here are a couple:

- [House Concurrent Resolution 1](#): The bill would designate the onion as the official state vegetable of Oregon. This will surely bring a tear to the eye of some of our non-onion vegetable growers in the state.
- [Senate Joint Resolution 25](#): The bill would amend Oregon's Constitution to lower the voting age from 18 years old to 16 years old.

If you have any questions about the session or particular legislation, please contact OBA's Vice President and Government Affairs Director Kevin Christiansen at (503) 576-4123 or kchristiansen@oregonbankers.com. If you have interest in particular bills, you can [click here](#) to review any bill.

OBA Virtual Bankers Day Is This Friday

As you have probably heard, OBA's Virtual Bankers Day at the Capitol is this Friday, February 19 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. We have a variety of legislators joining us to talk about the session, including Senate President **Peter Courtney** (D-Salem), Senate Republican Leader **Fred Girod** (R-Stayton), and House Republican Leader **Christine Drazan** (R-Canby). The chairs of the Judiciary and Revenue Committees are also confirmed to join us. We're looking forward to these legislative leaders sharing with us their views on the session, as well as updates from our government relations team. If you have not already done so, please sign up by [clicking here](#). We look forward to you joining us on Friday morning.

Political Odds and Ends

To close, the following are some political odds and ends:

- Oregon celebrated its 162nd birthday on Valentine's Day. Oregon became a state on February 14, 1859 during the administration of President James Buchanan.
- 2021 is the year in which Oregon is slated to redraw its legislative and congressional districts based on results from the 2020 Census. Unfortunately, [it is being reported](#) that census data from the federal government, necessary to redraw legislative and congressional districts, is unlikely to be available until July, after the deadline for the legislature to come up with a re-districting plan. If the legislature doesn't act or can't act, Secretary of State **Shemia Fagan** is tasked with drawing up a redistricting plan.



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