



2007 Legislative Accomplishments

One of the OSCC's greatest accomplishments during the 2007 legislative session was to increase the visibility of and interest in the Chambers as a statewide organization. The introduction of the OSCC to legislators and their staff was well-received and sparked much interest in the role that Chambers would and will continue to play in shaping public policy. *The ability of the OSCC to impact the outcome of specific legislation and the overall direction of policy issues was considerably enhanced through the mobilization of Chamber members who provided legislators with testimony and a personal business perspective on key issues.* The OSCC plans to enhance these "grassroots efforts" in the future in order to continue to build on the momentum gained during 2007.

While over 600 bills were closely monitored during the course of the legislative session, the OSCC's most active lobbying efforts were focused on a select number of bills either closely related to the adopted legislative priorities or that would have a significant impact on Chambers and the members they serve. For those issues where a strong position was taken, the OSCC was able to play a direct role in the outcome of issues and bills such as:

CORPORATE MINIMUM TAX:

Increasing the corporate minimum tax was a major priority of Democratic leaders in 2007, and numerous bills to do so were considered. Many of these involved complex, burdensome and disproportionate formulas for insuring that businesses paid their "fair share" of taxes. The OSCC was one of the first business entities to oppose legislation that would have implemented an increase in the corporate minimum tax based upon a corporation's gross sales. That opposition was a strong factor in the ultimate defeat of all increase proposals. While no increase was implemented in 2007, the issue is very likely to be revisited in future legislative sessions.

PRODUCT LIABILITY:

The OSCC, along with other business entities, played a significant role in blocking an attempt by the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association to significantly lengthen the time frame for consumers to sue for product liability. The bill failed to pass due to united business opposition, but is likely to be introduced again in future legislative sessions.

FUNDING FOR STATE POLICE:

Several proposals were introduced this session that would have implemented a variety of new taxes and/or surcharges in order to provide adequate funding for state police. The OSCC advocated that funding of state police and forensic needs should come from the general fund and that any attempt to hold public safety services "hostage" in return for higher taxes, surcharges or fees, would be irresponsible. Ultimately, the Oregon State Police budget was funded through the general fund this legislative session but plans to ensure adequate funding of state police into the future through a designated general fund allocation were not implemented and will likely be revisited in the future.

HEALTH CARE REFORM:

The OSCC identified the need for healthcare reform early on in its process of formulating a legislative platform for the 2007 session. The OSCC testified before the Senate Special Committee on Health Care Reform and actively lobbied for proposals that would allow for Oregon to take the first steps towards comprehensively addressing our health care system. Legislation was adopted via SB 329 and will implement a framework and process for health care reform with a final comprehensive plan to be considered and potentially approved by the 2009 Legislature. The OSCC will continue to monitor this issue as the process moves forward.

OVERTIME PAY:

The OSCC opposed legislation this session that would have allowed the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) Commissioner to adopt rules permitting overtime pay for work after eight hours in one day or, in cases where employers have adopted an alternative workweek schedule that authorizes employees to work ten hours per day within a 40-hour workweek, after 10 hours in one day. This bill would have severely hampered the ability to maintain flexibility in employee scheduling and was strongly opposed by the OSCC which solicited local Chamber members to provide testimony against the bill. Thanks to those efforts, the bill received only one hearing and did not progress further.

For a more detailed report of bills and legislative issues monitored by the OSCC in 2007 please contact OSCC lobbyist, Tracy Rutten at tracy@westernadvocates.com.