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## **PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN OREGON GOVERNMENT**

### **OVERVIEW**

So many times we hear of, or have had, a bad experience when dealing with government personnel. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that there are no competing services for government agencies, employees become entrenched and protected by union policies, and most bureaucratic leaders have no real inspiration for providing better customer service. We must expect better of our government employees, from the top down. We need to encourage, recognize, and reward good customer service. What a different opinion we might have about government if we were welcomed with a friendly, can do attitude!

We need to create an environment that rewards innovation and budgetary restraint. One that eliminates the “If you don’t spend it you won’t get it next year” budgeting nightmare we have. We must reward employees and agencies that create cost saving measures or come in under budget.

We aren’t asking the question “Is this something the government is supposed to do?” when the multitudes of people come to government expecting someone else to take care of their problem. Some problems need to be handled outside of government. We can’t expect, nor should we desire, government to solve all the problems in this state.

Below is an outline of some of Oregon’s major problems, with guidelines to help us solve those problems.

### **BUDGET**

**Problem:** Our state budget is out of control. Spending is increasing faster than our population growth and the economy.

**Solutions:**

- 1) Prioritize programs before budgeting; budget only programs deemed absolutely a government responsibility, limit growth of those programs to a formula that includes legal population growth and economic indexes.
- 2) Reduce government costs (current and legacy) by reviewing departments and programs with the intent to privatize as many as fiscally prudent.
- 3) Encourage private sector (both charitable and profit-driven) involvement in solutions for needy Oregonians.

## **EDUCATION**

Problem: Huge overall costs, poor graduation rate, legacy costs, and motivation of staff.

Solutions:

- 1) Promote on-line, Charter Schools, and special need schools
- 2) Allow voucher programs for private schools
- 3) Connect pay to performance (individual, building, and district)
- 4) Get dollars to classroom level

## **TAXES**

Problem: Current tax structure is punitive and discouraging.

Solutions:

- 1) Modify/amend measure 67 to be a surcharge tax on net profit, not gross revenue
- 2) Terminate both 66 and 67 next legislative session
- 3) End Oregon involvement in any estate/death tax programs
- 4) Index capital gains tax to inflation
- 5) Review all tax programs to determine best revenue for least economic impact

## **ECONOMY**

Problem: Oregon's economy is stifled by an overload of tax burden and unfunded liability.

Solutions:

- 1) Current government/private sector employment is out of balance, privatize where possible
- 2) Remove as many fees/taxes as possible
- 3) Create a business-friendly environment in permitting and licensing
- 4) Restructure current PERS program to reduce/eliminate unfunded liability
- 5) Encourage business enterprise zones, enhance entrepreneurial activity

## **ENERGY**

Problem: State continues to pursue a path of energy promotion that defies economic soundness

Solutions:

- 1) Embrace hydro-electric power as true "green" energy source.
- 2) Embrace nuclear power as long-term power source
- 3) Allow new private development of energy sources
- 4) Encourage LNG ports and support Palomar gas line work
- 5) Any change in infrastructure and deliver must be supported by sound economics and research
- 6) Remove costly programs like Business Energy Tax Credit

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Problem: A culture of dependency.

Solutions:

- 1) Motivate participants to improve lives through exercise, nutrition, and education. Tie all benefits given to mandatory participation in programs that would lead to self-reliance.
- 2) Limit types of food items that can be purchased with Oregon Trail card. (Staples, fruits/vegetables, meats, etc). Purchase of candy, soda pop, non-nutritional foods not allowed on taxpayer dime. (Current W.I.C. programs accomplish this. The current Oregon Trail card does not allow purchase of tobacco or alcohol on taxpayer dime).
- 3) Require drug testing for enrollment in programs
- 4) Require verification of citizenship/legal residence for enrollment in programs (use e-verify)

## **HEALTH CARE**

Problem: The system is plagued by continued rising costs and entrenched monopolies.

Solutions:

- 1) Restore consumer to rightful place in transaction
- 2) Remove medical monopolies in delivery aspect of industry
  - a. End non-compete for hospitals from Nixon era
  - b. Increase number of accreditation organizations
  - c. Allow purchasing of insurance across state lines
- 3) Encourage innovation in staffing and education
  - a. Review necessary certification/education level for simple tasks
  - b. Review education requirements for delivery of care (ie: in 2017 you will be required to have doctorate degree to be a physical therapist – will that reduce costs?)
- 4) Remove health care “benefit” from employment
  - a. Improves competition in insurance marketplace
  - b. Encourages higher use of HSA type programs rather than expensive HMO programs
  - c. Puts consumer back in cost control position
  - d. Encourages medical field to actually know/publish costs for procedures
  - e. Truly makes health care and insurance “portable” and private