

New Oregon TV channel allows residents to watch legislators at work

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The television pilot project will air gavel-to-gavel, unedited coverage of the Legislative Session starting January 8th, 2007

Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Karen Minnis and House Speaker-elect Jeff Merkley announced Tuesday that a new pilot project called "The Oregon Channel" will hit the airwaves on Opening Day of the 2007 Session, providing a new way for citizens to watch their legislators at work.

"For the first time ever, Oregonians will have a television channel dedicated solely to covering the Legislature and state government. This new Oregon Channel will be a good resource for Oregonians to learn more about their government," said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn).

"The Oregon Channel" will be available in most areas served by OPB, and on cable in the Bend area via BendBroadband. "The Oregon Channel is one of the only practical means for many Oregonians to actually see what goes on in Salem," said House Speaker Karen Minnis (R-Wood Village). "The channel is the next step in Oregon's history of open government and it will make us more accessible to those we serve."

Oregonians value an open, honest and accessible legislature. "The Oregon Channel is one more way we can involve citizens in the process, and promote transparency and accountability in government," said House Speaker-elect Jeff Merkley (D-Portland).

The Oregon Legislature joined forces with Oregon Public Broadcasting, Southern Oregon Public Television, the Oregon University System and the Oregon Public Affairs Network to create the pilot television channel. Programming will include unedited, gavel-to-gavel coverage of Senate and House floor sessions, committee hearings, Capitol news conferences, and other state government and public affairs events of statewide interest.

The Oregon Channel will be broadcast over the airwaves on a digital television channel available in most of the state's largest cities served by OPB and SOPTV. The channel will also be available on participating digital cable systems, including Comcast, Charter, Bend Broadband and Clear Creek Cable. More information about how and where to watch the Oregon Channel can be found at www.oregonchannel.org, where viewers can also watch the channel online, look up program schedules and access live streaming video feeds from the Capitol hearing rooms and chambers.

The pilot will conclude at the end of the 2007 Session, at which time the channel will be evaluated to determine the feasibility of building a permanent Oregon Channel statewide. The project will cost approximately \$150,000, and will be funded by savings in the legislative budget. All of the project partners are contributing equipment and staff time for the project.

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