

Senator Smith mixed on budget proposal

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Good signs for rural counties; Healthcare proposals need work

President Bush's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Proposal will help advance several Oregon projects, while making "alarming" changes to state and federally run health care programs, U.S. Senator Gordon H. Smith (R-OR) noted today.

U.S. Senator Gordon H. Smith (R-OR) "We've got some good and we've got some items that need work," Smith said. "On one hand, a one-year county payments extension and funding for the Northwest Forest Plan is a good thing. On the other hand, I am frustrated with the regulatory tinkering happening to our nation's health care programs. These are alarming proposals to our health care system, many have already been denied by Congress."

President Bush FY 2008 budget proposal makes good on several Oregon initiatives, such as extending the county payment safety net, strengthening the Oregon economy and upgrading equipment for first responders.

"The Good", according to Smith, are:

County Payments "The Administration supports a one-year extension of the county payments safety net at the current funding and formula levels. The extension is critical to Oregon's rural counties.

Northwest Forest Plan "Making good on a ten-year old promise, the Forest Service proposes enough funding to produce 800 million board feet of lumber a year in western and central Oregon

Columbia River Channel Deepening " \$15 million to continue construction deepening the Columbia River

shipping lane

First Responders â€“ Increases funding available to states to build the next generation of public safety communications networks that firefighters, police and first responders use during an emergency

Community Health Centers â€“ Increased funding to \$207 million, creating 220 new safety net clinics and expanding 120 existing sites across the country

Methamphetamine â€“ Targets the methamphetamine epidemic in Indian Country through the new Safe Indian Communities Initiative

Tax Relief â€“ Makes room to make recent tax relief permanent. Raising income taxes is a ridiculous idea that would imperil Oregonâ€™s economy

Several recommendations made in the budget proposals that need work:

Medicaid â€“ Proposes limits on funding that states, like Oregon, can generate from localities and government providers, known as intergovernmental transfers (IGTs), reducing funding nationally by \$5 billion over five years. Reduces Medicaid funding by \$3.65 billion over five years by restricting a school's use of Medicaid to deliver health care and support services to children who qualify for assistance based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) " \$4.8 billion increase over 5 years is not enough to cover those currently receiving services and to enroll all the children who are eligible, but not currently participating in the program

Treating HIV/AIDS Domestically " Shows a poor commitment to domestic treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is inadequately funded, placing thousands of Americans in danger.

Teen Suicide Prevention " Disappointingly funds the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, which funds state, tribal and college/university youth suicide prevention and intervention programs, below the necessary \$40 million

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