Senator Smith to vote No: spending bill lacks county payment extension

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Filibuster fails; Senator turns to emergency funding for Iraq as next option for safety net extension

After having Senate leaders reject his offer of a one-year, $400 million county payments safety net extension Tuesday morning and exhausting all options, including filibustering a must-pass spending bill, Oregon Senator Gordon Smith announced his opposition to legislation that will fund the federal government for the balance of the year because it fails to help rural Oregon.

Senator Smith's filibuster fails; vows to vote 'no' on spending bill that lacks a county payment extension. "This is a very important fight, a fight I will continue," Smith said. "The pink slips have been issued and they are about to become real. This funding is vital to keeping schools open, sheriffs departments staffed and roads paved. We will keep this fight up. It's just that simple."

On Monday, Senator Smith spent nearly three hours on the Senate floor reviewing the impact Congress's inaction has on Oregon. Senator Smith's remarks included a comprehensive review of Oregon forest policy, the impact of the federal government owning over half the land in Oregon, and reading the lyrics of Lumberjack, a song written by musician Johnny Cash.

On Tuesday morning, Senate leaders refused to allow a vote on a one-year extension. Later in the day, Senator Smith opposed a cloture motion, which was approved by the Senate by a vote of 71 to 26, ending debate on the legislation that will fund the government through September 30, 2007.

Senator Smith pledged to continue his efforts to include county payments funding in each bill that comes to the floor of the U.S. Senate. The next opportunity will be the Emergency Supplemental bill to fund the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, slated for Senate debate in the coming months.

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