House approves bill to close ethical loopholes

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Dems lead House to approve time-out for legislators who become lobbyists; bill now moves to SenateSALEM--House Democrats led the Oregon House today to approve, 38-22, a bill that prevents former legislators from lobbying the Oregon State Legislature for one full legislative session after their terms expire. Oregon already has such limitations in place for the State Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner and other officials in key regulatory departments.

"We are elected to represent the public and should not use or appear to use our public offices as a pathway to personal financial gain," said State Representative Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland) who made the Democrats' case for the bill on the House Floor. "We need to draw a clear line between service as a legislator and working for special interests. This bill draws that line."

Democrats say the legislation is needed in order to close what has been known as the "revolving door," which allows legislators to leave office and immediately lobby their former colleagues using the influence, privileges and access they gained as legislators--often for big paychecks.

Closing the revolving door has been a key part of the House Democrats Roadmap for Oregon's Future and a cornerstone of their ethics reform initiatives. House Democrats, with bi-partisan support, have pushed for multiple sessions to pass similar legislation. Each of the proposals was blocked by House Republican Leadership.

Today, some Republicans argued on the House Floor that laws restricting the lobbying activities of former legislators were not necessary and that the solution to ethical problems was simply to elect ethical legislators. "After more than a decade of failed Republican leadership on legislative ethics, House Republicans are saying to the public, 'just trust us,â€™â€• said House Majority Leader Dave Hunt (D-Clackamas County). "History has shown us that just doesn't work. Today, House Democrats have raised the ethics bar and gone a long way to end public perception of cronyism and undue influence." The bill will now moves to the Senate.