

**Date:** June 25, 2023  
**To:** Metro Council  
**From:** Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager  
Jenna Jones, State and Regional Affairs Advisor  
**Re:** End of Session Report on 2023 Legislative Session

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## **Background**

As you will recall, in January you adopted Resolution 23-5305, which established the Metro Council's overall legislative agenda for the 2023 legislative session and incorporated the Council's legislative principles. An annotated version of Exhibit A to Resolution 23-5305, which lists the Council's specific legislative priorities, is attached. The annotations describe outcomes of the session with respect to each legislative priority; the document also includes outcomes for other issues on which Metro staff engaged but that were not part of the Council's pre-session agenda.

## **Session Atmosphere**

The 2023 Legislature convened on January 17 and adjourned on June 25, on its constitutional deadline. There were several significant changes from prior sessions that impacted the tone and tenor of session. First, this session was marked by new leadership and members, and some established norms and routines of the past looked different. Following record-breaking legislative leadership tenures, Oregon has a new Governor, a new Senate President and a fairly new Speaker. It was also the session following redistricting, and consequently, there were a significant number of first-time legislators. In addition, because of the pandemic, second term legislators had only participated in remote committee hearings and work sessions. For many of the sophomore members who held chair gavels, it was their first time managing a committee in person.

For the past few years, because of the pandemic, Oregon's Legislature has primarily operated remotely. This session, the Capitol Building was open to the public and many lobbyists returned to the building. However, construction reduced the number of hearing rooms available for legislative committees to meet and closed large portions of the building. While we were back in person, space was limited and at times, challenging to navigate.

Our job as lobbyists experienced some growing pains as legislators, staff and lobbyists all became reacclimated to in-person/hybrid session. Some expectations of past in-person sessions had changed, but for the most part we were able to catch members for brief conversations in the Capitol, have drop-by conversations with staff and glean important tidbits of information, from those who roam the halls of the building. However, there were still many folks continuing to choose to work and testify from home, and all parties had to embrace the new hybrid environment.

The beginning of session was marked with significant bipartisanship and a commitment to pass two bipartisan 60-day packages (one for housing and one for semiconductors). This was a marked tone shift from prior sessions in which Republicans had walked out to prevent specific legislative priorities from advancing. In November 2022, Oregon voters passed Measure 113

which changed the state's constitution to bar any lawmaker from running for re-election if they have 10 or more unexcused absences from a floor session during a single legislative session. The combination of new leadership, new members and a constitutional amendment had many parties hoping that walkouts were a thing of the past.

However, following the passage of the two 60-day packages and a slew of other bipartisan bills, the majority of Senate Republicans and Independents walked out at the beginning of May and denied quorum on the Senate Floor until roughly one week before constitutional sine die. Their chief complaints were HB 2002, relating to reproductive and transgender rights, and HB 2005, relating to firearms. As a result of the walkout, all but three Senate Republicans could be barred from reelection. In addition, Senate Republicans refused to grant unanimous consent to dispense with the word-for-word reading of bills, which meant floor activity slowed to a crawl, creating long backlogs of bills awaiting floor votes. The House Republicans required readings of controversial bills but for the greater part of session agreed to suspend rules around reading bills word-for-word.

## **Outcomes**

The session began with a bipartisan commitment to addressing semiconductors and housing in the first two months of session. Each of these issues received significant attention for the first 60-days and preliminary consensus packages were passed on these topics. Housing and homelessness, climate resiliency, drought, infrastructure and economic recovery, and reproductive rights were also primary conversation drivers this session. In addition, the budget was expected to be tight because the significant infusion of one-time federal funds was dwindling, and the economic forecasts of the beginning of session suggested a looming recession. Ultimately, the budget situation was much less dire than earlier worst-case scenarios had suggested.

Considering the challenges described above, we (in collaboration with many partners) were able to achieve a few key priorities outlined in your agenda.

- Oregon's commitment of \$1 billion for the Interstate Bridge Replacement Project;
- Needing housing reforms including a more efficient state pipeline for private activity bond funding and a modernized housing production methodology in the land use system through the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis;
- The defeat of all bills that were targeted at undermining Metro's supportive housing services work and authority;
- Modernized electric recycling (E-cycles) program; and
- Funding for abandoned and derelict vessels.

As mentioned above, attached is a more detailed version of the Council's specific legislative priorities and associated session outcomes. Naturally, your GAPD team will work with you later this year to develop your legislative agenda for the 2024 session. Some items we anticipate could be of interest to Council in 2024 include:

- Right to Repair legislation;
- Abandoned RV program;
- Industrial Site Readiness