

Date: March 14, 2024
To: Metro Council
From: Jenna Jones, State and Regional Affairs Advisor
Re: End of Session Report on 2024 Legislative Session

Background

As you will recall, in January you adopted Resolution 24-5377, which established the Metro Council's overall legislative agenda for the 2024 legislative session and incorporated the Council's legislative principles. An annotated version of the resolution, 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 Legislature convened on February 5 and adjourned on March 7, a few days before its constitutional deadline. Unlike long sessions, short sessions focus on small, necessary budgetary tweaks, passing technical fixes and a few pieces of policy legislation. It is rare for large, controversial pieces of legislation to pass or significant budget changes to occur. Many parties approach the short session with only one or two minor bills, and legislative leadership limits the number of bills legislators are allowed to file.

Additionally, there was additional certainty that a walkout would not occur. Days leading up to the session, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that Republican senators who walked out last year can't seek reelection. Fortunately, quorum was maintained through the entirety of session as some lawmakers focused on securing wins for their districts in their last term.

Reelection restricted legislators, under Measure 113, were not the only ones trying to leave their mark on the legislative branch as there are an unusual number of statewide seats up for election in 2024 and sitting legislators have indicated an interest or are running for these seats. Former Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan (D) resigned in May 2023 due to conflicts of interest with the cannabis industry. This results in an open seat in 2024 for Oregon Secretary of State. Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read (D) and State Senator James Manning (D-Eugene) have filed for the position. In addition, State Senator Steiner (D-Portland) is running for Treasurer. Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum has also indicated she is not running again, and House Speaker Dan Rayfield (D - Corvallis) is running for the seat.

In addition, Oregon's congressional seats have also garnered legislators' interest. Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D) will not be running for re-election, providing an open seat for Oregon's 3rd congressional district. Maxine Dexter (D-Portland) is running for the seat. Oregon's Congressional District 5, held of Congresswoman Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R), also has a legislator running for the seat: Rep Janelle Bynum (D - Clackamas). Fortunately, this did not result in legislative leadership changes nor new legislative members during the short session but will likely result in major shifts for 2025.

Outcomes

Housing production, Measure 110 reforms, and campaign finance 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.

Given the expected nature of the session, your agenda was relatively modest. However, considering the challenges described above, we (in collaboration with many partners) were able to achieve a few key priorities outlined in your agenda.

- Oregon became the fourth state to pass right to repair laws;
- Significant housing infrastructure funding;
- Investment in arts and culture organizations;
- Gap funding for the city owned Hillsboro Hops stadium; and
- A pathway for the Columbia River levee system to finance its future.

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 2025 session. Some items we anticipate could be of interest to Council in 2025 include:

- A transportation package;
- Bottle bill amendments and reform; and
- Comprehensive recreational immunity reforms.