



Hometown Voices: Wise Choices

More than two-thirds of Oregon's citizens live in a city. It's where people choose to live, where their kids are educated, and where they participate in community activities. Cities are where Oregon does business. Employers choose to locate in cities because they need the kinds of services cities provide. These essential services are indispensable—water, sewer, roads, police, and fire. They determine a community's quality of life. Local officials, residents and businesses work together every day to shape their communities and solve problems.

The best answers to complex local issues are “home grown”, where people have the greatest opportunity to participate and provide input into decisions that impact their community.

Citizens take pride in their city and its unique challenges, character and priorities. To meet the needs and expectations of Oregon's businesses and citizens, cities have identified the following priorities:

Financial Stability:

Constitutional property tax limits (Measures 5, 47 and 50) have limited the ability of cities to raise the funds necessary to provide the essential services that citizens and businesses expect and depend on. To benefit citizens and businesses we must preserve existing revenue options; cities must have the ability to make decisions locally that fit their communities. In addition, cities must be able to control personnel costs and manage their workforce.

- Support cities' ability to make local decisions related to revenue and funding.
 - The ability to raise revenue at the local level allows cities to be proactive and solve problems with local involvement, and makes cities less dependent on the state.
- Maintain state shared revenue payments from liquor, cigarette, 9-1-1 and gas taxes.
 - These revenues are essential to providing services that residents and businesses expect.
 - These funds offset the local impact of alcohol and cigarette consumption, provide property tax relief, and represent longstanding, good faith promises by the state.
- Oppose changes to interest arbitration and collective bargaining laws that would undermine the interest and welfare of the public and cities ability to fund important services.

Water Rights:

A recent court decision has thrown into jeopardy the ability of cities to maintain their water rights and provide Oregon citizens and businesses adequate water. Cities will pursue legislation to maintain the historic practice of long-term planning, efficient management, and conservation of municipal water supplies.

- Support the Responsible Community Planning Act (2005 legislation sponsored by the League)
 - Oregon's 30+ year tradition of long-range planning works
 - Oregon's economy needs certainty in water planning

- Municipal water suppliers and the Department of Water Resources have invested years of effort in long-term planning...municipal water rights and that planning is in jeopardy.

Land Use:

To benefit citizens and businesses, cities must have the ability to make land use planning decisions that fit their community. Additionally, cities support a clear, more efficient way to determine compliance with state requirements in development issues, including land use, waste water, transportation planning and employment sector economic development projects.

- Support the ability of cities to make land use planning and economic development decisions locally.
- Support local authority in the balancing of the rights of property owners and residents.

Telecommunication Franchise, Tax, Fee and Rights-of-Way Authority:

For over 100 years cities have been responsible for managing the public rights of way on behalf of citizens. As land lords of public property, city officials are held accountable by taxpayers for management of these public assets and must retain the authority to collect adequate compensation for the use of public rights-of-way.

Most Oregon cities have home rule power derived from the Oregon Constitution that authorizes other forms of taxation, including sales or use taxes and business privilege taxes. Some cities (Eugene) have or are considering using this authority to apply a broad based tax or fee on telecom industry gross revenue, including wireless.

In the 2005 legislative session, cities expect challenges to our existing authority to collect telecommunications franchise fees and other revenue.

- Support city authority to collect franchise fees and other fees and taxes from the telecommunications industry.
- Recognize the responsibility of cities to manage public rights-of-way on behalf of their residents and the need for them to receive fair compensation for the use of those public investments.
- Franchise fees (on all utilities) are the second largest revenue source for cities.

Specific background and talking points on each of these legislative priorities can be accessed by going to the password protected "Premium" section of the "Hometown Voices" portion of the LOC web site (please call Stephanie Nixon at 503-588-6550 to obtain your city's password). To get to the "Hometown Voices" main page, go to www.orcities.org and click on the green "Hometown Voices" button on the left.

Please do not hesitate to contact Andrea Fogue, Hometown Voices Program Manager to learn more about how you can participate in the "Hometown Voices" program or David Barenberg, Legislative Director, with questions about the legislative session. They can be contacted at (503) 588-6550 (Salem) or 1-800-452-0338.