

# June 2011 Newsletter for Oregon State Senator Doug Whitsett, District 28



## Senator Doug Whitsett

R-Klamath Falls - District 28

I represent the citizens of Senate District 28, which includes Klamath, Lake and Crook, as well as parts of Jackson and Deschutes Counties.

As Senator of one of the largest Senate districts in the state, it is extremely important that my constituents remain in contact with me about the issues and concerns that affect their lives. You and I must work together to protect the common interests of rural Oregonians.

I encourage you to contact my office by either email or telephone so that I can know how to best serve you. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best Regards,  
Senator Doug Whitsett

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## WHY WERE NEW JOBS BILLS KILLED?

We believe that more than 20,000 private sector family-wage jobs would be created by the passage of three bills currently stuck in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. It becomes less likely with each passing day that these bills will move because time is running out on this legislative session. To date, neither committee Chair Dingfelder nor Senate President Courtney has allowed any of these bills even the courtesy of a hearing.

SB 190 is the Columbia River Fair Share Act. Only about seven percent of the total flow of the Columbia River is diverted for out of stream use for irrigation and other purposes. Of that seven percent, the states of Idaho and Washington use 96% and Oregon uses only 4%. That means that Oregon currently uses only three tenths of one percent of the total River flow. Doubling that amount to six tenths of one percent would allow Oregon farmers to irrigate tens of thousand acres of fertile soil creating an oasis in Eastern Oregon. Being allowed to use their fair share of excess River water would spur a renaissance in Oregon's economy creating more than 16,500 jobs and adding more than \$750,000,000 per year to our state economy. Ironically, it is not the other states that prevent Oregon from using our fair share of the Columbia River flow. It is in fact our own state government leadership.

SB 190 may be stalled in the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources due to opposition from advocates for fish that believe that even 0.3 percent of a river's flow is too much to use to create sustainable communities. They and the majority party appear to believe that no amount of water should be used to irrigate croplands, rebuild sustainable rural communities and grow food to feed the people. Apparently, maintaining another 0.3 percent of the River flow for fish is more important than reducing homelessness, hunger, poverty, unemployment and hopelessness in Oregon.

Oregon boasted more than 400 timber mills that provided nearly 45,000 Oregon family wage jobs in 1980. At that time Oregon was a national leader in per capita income, rural communities were self sustaining and revenue flowed from the rural areas to help support our cities. Thirty years later that number had plummeted to less than 15,000 jobs found in about 100 timber mills. Many of the surviving mills are too often working only at partial capacity providing intermittent work. Oregon's per capita income now trails the national average by more than \$300 per month. Revenue flow has reversed and now courses from the cities to help sustain the rural communities.

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***Farmers being allowed to use their fair share of excess Columbia River water would spur a renaissance in Oregon's economy creating more than 16,500 jobs and adding more than \$750,000,000 per year to our state economy.***

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The job loss estimates do not include the jobs that were dependent upon the timber industry both in the forests and in the towns they supported. Entire communities are on the verge of collapse solely because they are not allowed to utilize the forest product resources that surround them. Those resources are literally being allowed to rot on the stump rather than being put to any beneficial purpose. More than 500,000 contiguous acres, more than 800 square miles, of pine bark beetle killed forest are awaiting destruction by conflagration in a single area near Paisley, Oregon. Virtually nothing is being done to stop the spread of the devastating forest disease while meaningful salvage is being prevented by myriad lawsuits claiming the defense of sustainable forests. Oregon political

leadership has been supportive of the federal harvest restrictions for more than two decades and has even sued to prevent increased harvest on more than one occasion.

The combined effect of two forest bills stalled in the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources would create 4,300 family wage jobs and add at least \$500 million to Oregon's economy. SB 460 would require harvesting diseased areas of both the Tillamook State Forest and the Clatsop State Forest. SB464 would end the artificially low harvest levels on all state owned forest lands. It would require sustainable management of timber production for the maximum public benefit. Advocates for the preservation of old growth forests, natural fish and for natural free flowing rivers appear to be using alleged endangered spotted owls and other allegedly threatened creatures to hold these common sense measures at bay.

This week the Senate Republicans attempted a procedure to pull these measures out of committee for a direct Senate floor vote. We believe that both measures would pass with a strong bipartisan majority vote if only allowed the opportunity. Unfortunately, both efforts were rejected by the majority Democrats on traditional party-line procedural votes.

Perhaps it is time to break with tradition and to make a serious effort to address Oregon's woeful economic situation. Shouldn't our Legislators put the interests of our people above the interests of selected species? Isn't it time to consider overriding the oppressive control of Oregon's preservationist community and create some jobs for Oregonians?

*Please remember, if we do not stand up for rural Oregon no one will.*

Best regards,  
Doug