

## **Oregon League of Conservation Voters. 2003 OLCV Environmental Scorecard** (Reviewed by Whitney Avery)

The Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) has for the past thirty-two years (16 biennial sessions) scored the Oregon legislators on their commitment to the environment. The Scorecard is compiled by volunteers who evaluate votes on issues nominated by experts in Oregon's environmental associations. The volunteers then score the votes based on how clearly the bill was either pro- or anti-environment and how well the bill represents a cross-section of interests of Oregonians. The final decision on what votes to include rests with the OLCV Board of Directors.

Overall, this was not a good year for the environment. The scorecard shows that many, many of the bills that came to the table were anti-environment. The House was largely responsible for this and the Senate killed many of the bills proposed, often with the backing of Gov. Kulongoski's veto threat. Many of the things that were scored were related to land use and urban sprawl. The bills that are most relevant to the Willamette River are: House Bill 5020, House Bill 2614, House Bill 2652, Senate Bill 5501, and Senate Bill 751.

House Bill 5020 relates to salmon habitat restoration. In 1998 voters passed Measure 66, which increased lottery funding for wild salmon. HB 5020 diverted \$4 million of this money to fund hatcheries and hatchery fish research. It also eliminated the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Department's Habitat Division. It passed.

House Bill 2614 would have made it more difficult and expensive for the State to declare agricultural sites in violation of water and air quality regulations. It died in the Senate.

House Bill 2652 was related to the pollution control tax credit (PCTC), which is an antiquated law from the 1960's pollution control era. At that time it helped industries put new pollution controls in place. Today, it just pays industries for staying in-line with current regulations. So, basically, taxpayers still end up being the ones to pay to clean-up industry created pollution. In the 2001 session the PCTC was revised and will largely be phased out. House Bill 2652 would have reversed many of these changes and even extended the life of the program. It died in the Senate.

Senate Bill 5501 effectively kills the Pesticide Right to Know Bill that was passed in 1999 (almost unanimously). That bill was never funded and now is basically dead. It would have been an important step for finding the contributors of non-point source pollution by tracking who is using what pesticides, where and how much.

Senate Bill 751 is here dubbed the "Willamette Clean-up Mirage." The problem with this bill is that it creates a new "authority" that can't do anything that the state doesn't already have the power to do and may in fact get in the way of already established groups. It also allows for the possibility of taxpayers bearing even more of the burden of clean up, which should be paid by the polluters.

## **Critique:**

This is an important piece to look at when considering the political game surrounding environmental politics. It gives you a sense of where the legislature stands and what may be possible in the near future. It also gives a little bit of history so that you can see the fickleness of the Legislature's support, for example, passing the groundbreaking Pesticide Right to Know legislation and then not funding it and killing it four years later.

Though this purports to be a fair and balanced view, the pro-environment side is espousing it. This does not make it a worthless analysis. On the contrary, it lets you know where one side is coming, because everyone knows that businesses only think about their pocket book and the bottom line. The OLCV looks at what a bill means for the taxpayer and the environment. Many people probably don't realize that while many of these bills are seemingly pro-environment, e.g. Senate Bill 751, what it is really doing is diverting the costs that businesses should be incurring to the taxpayer. Most importantly, it shows where and what the fight is on the environment and who is "winning."

For more information, contact the OLCV at: 503-224-4011.

[http://www.olcv.org/scorecardpages\\_2003/03billdescrip.html](http://www.olcv.org/scorecardpages_2003/03billdescrip.html) [cited 12 April 2004]

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