



**Oregon State Chamber of Commerce
Legislative Update
January 10, 2023
“Legislature Prepares for 2023 Session”**

The Legislature convened yesterday to swear in new legislators, and the governor. This was a day full of ceremony and photo-ops, but it provided us with a lot of useful information and set the tone for the months ahead.

1,800 bills have been introduced. These are only bills that were pre-session filed, so we expect to see many more introduced after session begins on January 17th. We will begin our customary review of all bills and start the process of informing chambers of relevant bills. We will be seeking input for impacts and prioritization.

The first tranche of bills can be viewed [here](#).

Governor Tina Kotek gave her inaugural address after her swearing in. You can watch it [here](#).

Kotek’s team sent out a memo outlining some key staff and advisors. As she builds her team it will be important for us to know who is in key positions, as we will be working closely with her staff.

Education and Behavioral Health Staffing Updates:

- **Pooja Bhatt** will serve as the Education Initiative Director. Bhatt will be joining the Governor’s Policy Initiatives Team alongside **Annaliese Dolph**, Behavioral Health Initiative Director, and **Taylor Smiley Wolfe**, Housing Initiative Director. The Policy Initiatives Team is a new structure within the Governor’s Office to focus staff capacity on Kotek’s three priority issues of statewide concern.
- **Melissa Goff** will join the administration as the Governor’s Education Advisor. Goff joins the Governor’s Office from the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA).
- **Ebony Clarke** will serve as the new Behavioral Health Director. She most recently served as the Director of Multnomah County’s Health Department.
- Additionally, following the upcoming legislative session, **Colt Gill**, Director of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), will retire after serving more than 30 years as an Oregon educator.

Senior Staff Additions:

- **An Do** will serve as the new Director of Public Affairs and Communications. Do most recently served as Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon & Planned Parenthood PAC of Oregon (PPAO/PP-PAC).
- **Richard Lane** comes to the administration as the new General Counsel. Lane earned his law degree from Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College in 1986, and is the former chairperson of the Oregon State Bar Procedure and Practice Committee, and former chairperson of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association Legislative Committee.
- **Becca Uherbelau** will serve as the Governor’s Equity and Racial Justice Director. Uherbelau has a long history of working for Oregon’s public sector unions.
- **Bob Livingston** will serve as Legislator Director and Labor Liaison and joins the Governor’s Office after serving more than 30 years in the Oregon Fire Service.

Look for more updates in the coming days as we make our way through the 1,800 bills! Please be attentive this week to communication alerting you to bills we have flagged for your review.

House and Senate Committees for the 2023 session are now released.

You can see the new House committees [here](#).

You can see the new Senate committees [here](#).

You can see the committee calendar [here](#).

These new committee assignments give us some insight into how this session will differ from those in the past. With a relatively new House Speaker, and a brand-new Senate President for the first time in 20 years, we can expect things to operate differently as new leadership will have their own priorities and style.

After studying the new committees and their makeups, there are a few key takeaways:

1. First and foremost, there are no more Democratic “supermajorities” on committees. Every committee roster now features a 1-member Democratic majority.
2. However, in a trade-off, most of the committees that will consider more partisan objectives (Business & Labor, Judiciary, Health Care, Environment) do not feature any “swing” Democrats who might otherwise be a moderating influence on controversial bills.
3. Many of the legislature’s known pragmatic Democrats were assigned key roles on the more pragmatic committees – Transportation, Semi-Conductor, Higher Education, Economic Development.
4. The makeup of both the House and Senate Revenue Committees suggests that both committees will take a moderate posture.
5. Most committees will only be able to convene twice per week with a hard stop at 90 minutes per meeting. Paired with the aggressive deadlines, this suggests that fewer bills will be considered.
6. The “Special” Joint Committees indicate policies the legislature will prioritize in 2023 –the Interstate 5 Bridge Replacement and aiding Oregon’s semi-conductor industry.

The 2023 Legislative Session will be the first regular session since 2019 conducted in the Capitol with public access – although portions of session will still be conducted in a hybrid fashion. We will see many new faces in the legislature this year, with 21 newly elected Representatives, and 6 new Senators. We can expect the appointment of an additional new Senator in the coming weeks, as Senator Dallas Heard (R-Myrtle Creek) resigned at the start of the new year. Currently it is believed that Representative David Brock Smith (R-Coos Bay) will receive that appointment, leading to a new member in the House, as well.

It is not unusual for the House to have a dozen or so new members, but this session more than a third of the House will be freshman legislators. Interestingly, there are 45 legislators who have never experienced a “normal” session in the building where the public has been allowed in – that is half of the entire body.

Our team has already begun meeting with many of the new legislators, and we will continue to build new relationships once session begins on January 17th.