April 14, 2005

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
sets budget hearing for Medford

The Oregon Legislature’s Joint Committee on Ways and Means will hold a public hearing April 15 in Medford to receive citizen input on state budget proposals.

The session begins at 7 p.m. at McLoughlin Middle School, 320 West Second St. The panel has scheduled a series of public hearings around the state in addition to its regularly scheduled public hearings in the State Capitol to make it easier for Oregonians to comment on the proposed budget.

Supporters of Rogue Community College plan to attend the session and will urge lawmakers to adequately fund the state’s community colleges after several years of declining state support.

"It’s an investment in economic development," said RCC President Peter Angstadt. "We keep telling everybody that."

Gov. Ted Kulongoski’s original budget included a 5.5 percent cut to community colleges, but he recently released an updated budget based on improved economic forecasts that will return $23 million to the community college system.

“With $23 million proposed to be added back to the budget, we’re at $411 million,” Angstadt said. “That gets us right back to where we were before, and it’s a great place to start, but we really need to be thinking of $440 million so we can stay current given escalating operating costs,” he added.

A Klamath Falls hearing is set for April 16 at the Klamath County Government Center, 305 Main St.

People who are unable to attend a hearing but would like to comment on the state budget can send an e-mail to: state.budget2005@state.or.us. For other hearing dates, visit www.leg.state.or.us/budgethearings.pdf.

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