



Legislative Ramblings

by Greg Hazarabedian

Depending on when you read this, we will know or be close to knowing the results of the November elections, *Bush v. Gore* notwithstanding. We will be celebrating or mourning, depending on how our favorite candidates fared in the election. We will be speculating on how the successful Oregon ballot measures will impact our lives and practices. And we will, as an organization, be taking a close look at what the results tell us about the upcoming legislative session in Salem.

No matter what the results, come January a new legislative session will begin in Salem, and once again OCDLA will be there, advocating for sanity and fairness in our criminal justice system. We will be there with our fiscal issues lobbyist, Mark Nelson, who will continue his tireless efforts to ensure an adequate level of funding for public defense. And we will be there with our new substantive issues lobbyist, trying to stem the tide of bad ideas that are presented every session by those who don't understand our system or have any compassion for our clients.

As I write this, I know that our friend Ann Christian, who has served us extraordinarily well as lobbyist and advisor, has decided to accept a job much closer to home and in her home state of Washington (see Briefly, page 6). She does so with our profound thanks and best wishes. As of this writing we are in the process of finding a worthy replacement. This organization has been very fortunate to have a series of outstanding members do this work for us over the years, including Steve Andersen, Ingrid Swenson, Jim Arneson, Jim Rice, Kelly Skye, Susan Russell, John Hummel and Amy Elkanich, and we will soon have another dedicated and skilled individual join their ranks to carry our banner in Salem.

Lobbying is not cheap and, unlike other

OCDLA activities, it doesn't pay for itself. As an organization, we have tried to be creative in our efforts to pay for lobbying, and until now it was largely funded with auction proceeds. This year, your Board has decided to forgo the auction at the Benson Conference in December and instead hold a raffle for a SMART car as part of our legislative lobbying fundraising effort. Please do your part to ensure our continued effective presence in Salem and buy a few tickets. Tickets may be purchased from any Board member, the OCDLA office, or www.ocdla.org, up until 2:00 p.m. on December 4, and at the Winter Conference at the Benson Hotel in Portland until December 5, the date of the drawing.

As usual, the upcoming legislative session will consider a mix of proposals from many sources: OCDLA will introduce a few bills, as will the Attorney General's office and the Oregon District Attorneys Association, and of course, legislators will introduce their own bills. The OCDLA Legislative Committee (chaired by Bob Homan) has already logged half a dozen pre-session meetings and will meet weekly during the session. The committee reviews all bills relevant to criminal and juvenile law, as well as DMV and other related areas. We rank the bills in importance to OCDLA, from a 3 (just keep an eye on) to a 1 (highest priority lobbying effort). Our lobbyists keep us apprised of what's happening "in the building" and seek guidance from the committee.

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OCDLA Life Member **Greg Hazarabedian** is the Association's President. He is the board liaison to the Legislative Committee, and also serves on the Capital Defender, Law School Outreach, and Website Committee. Greg is director of Public Defender Services of Lane County in Eugene.

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It is a lot of work. Yet without these efforts Oregonians would be suffering under criminal laws even worse than what we now have. Every session several exceptionally bad ideas die due to our efforts. Several more pass but are better because we were involved. OCDLA really *does* make a difference. Many legislators have told us how much they depend on our lobbyist to educate them on our issues. We have accumulated a great deal of credibility in the building over the years among legislators from both parties.

So, by now you must be asking "Wow, how can I help?" Well, there are several things you can do: let us know if you have a personal relationship with a legislator, this can be very helpful; participate in the OCDLA "Legislative Drive-In" tentatively scheduled for March 5, 2009; e-mail or call your legislators on important bills when OCDLA asks...and we will ask; and buy those SMART car raffle tickets! Together we will once again make a difference in Salem. ☺

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