

# BEN WESTLUND

---

## FOR GOVERNOR



### MEDIA RELEASE

**Contact:**

Stacey Dycus

541-350-2781

[Stacey@benwestlund.com](mailto:Stacey@benwestlund.com)

[www.benwestlund.com](http://www.benwestlund.com)

### OREGON SENATOR DROPS PARTY AFFILIATION AND LAUNCHES GUBERNATORIAL BID

BEND, Ore. (February 14, 2006) – Oregon Senator Ben Westlund (I-Bend) announced on Tuesday that he plans to seek the people’s nomination for Governor by gathering signatures to run as an independent. To qualify for the ballot, he must submit just over 18,000 valid signatures by the end of August 2006.

“I have re-registered and am not a member of a party, not because I think Republicans or Democrats are bad, but because I feel that extreme partisanship is keeping us from solving Oregon’s most pressing problems and the party label was keeping me from truly being able to provide leadership on the issues Oregonians care about.”

A successful small businessman, Westlund has served as a Republican in the state legislature since 1997, and was elected first as state representative from rural Central Oregon. Westlund was appointed in the final days of the 2004 session to fill a vacancy in the Senate and was elected to the seat in November 2004, receiving both the Democrat and Republican nominations and over 80% of the votes cast.

Westlund’s politics defy party labels. He came under fire last session with a threatened recall for his sponsorship of SB1000, which would have made it illegal to discriminate against gays and lesbians and allowed civil unions for same-sex couples in the state. Westlund is a strong advocate for reducing health care costs for individuals and businesses and believes that primary and preventative healthcare is a fundamental right. He is a champion of reforming Oregon’s tax structure which is heavily dependent on the income tax. He received a 100% rating from AG-PAC for his efforts on behalf of farmers and ranchers and the Oregon League of Conservation Voters’, an environmental organization named him “Best Consensus Builder” of 2005.

“Ask any Oregonian to describe themselves and very few will list party first, second or even third. We register to vote as Republicans, Democrats, Greens, Libertarians or no party at all -- but that does not define us. We are all Oregonians first and we all should be working together to make Oregon a better place.”

Based on that conviction, Westlund aided in the creation of the Oregon Open Primary Initiative which aims to open Oregon’s primaries to all voters. “We have a closed primary system that excludes independent voters and elects the most democratic Democrats and the most republican Republicans and then we send them all to Salem and wonder why they can’t get along. It’s time we return to the Oregon way of getting things done: putting ideas before ideology and people before politics.”

(continued)

Westlund is the former co-chair of the budget writing Ways and Means Committee and has earned a reputation for understanding complex issues and for developing relationships on both sides of the aisle. He says voters find his solutions-oriented approach refreshing, and media coverage about his potential candidacy has generated emails, letters and calls of support. In August, *The Oregonian*, the statewide newspaper, suggested that he throw his hat into the ring calling him “the nearest facsimile in Oregon politics to the mythical beast that independent voters often tell pollsters they are looking for: a pro-education, pro-business moderate willing to buck his party.” *The Statesman Journal* editorialized that Ben is “the ideal candidate” while *the Source*, Central Oregon’s independent weekly, editorialized on “Why Ben Should Run,” explaining, “His record is that of a lawmaker who’s able to work both sides of the aisle to forge consensus. He’s also proven that he’s guided by principle rather than party loyalty or dogmatic ideology.”

A lung cancer survivor, Westlund brought many in the capitol to tears in June 2003 when he delivered his “return from the hospital” speech on the floor of the Oregon State House where he called on his colleagues to put aside partisanship and “stop being politicians who think only of the next election and start being statesmen who think only of the next generation.”

Upon recovery, he became a tireless advocate for health care, traveling the state to promote innovative solutions to the severe health care crisis facing the state. Last session he sponsored legislation to save businesses money by allowing them to pool their prescription drug costs, and was a chief sponsor of expanding insurance equity to the mentally ill. But still, he believes not enough was done to address the “health care crises of moral and economic proportions.”

For the first time, Westlund has turned to the initiative process to take some of these issues before the people. “When the Legislature fails to act, fails to address the critical problems facing the future...it’s up to the people to step forward and offer solutions.”

He is currently touting his HOPE for Oregon Families initiative, which makes access to primary and preventative health care a basic right of all Oregonians and directs the Legislature to increase health care access in the state. He is also sponsoring the Children’s Wellness Act initiative, which ensures access to basic health care to all Oregon children and provides subsidies to small employers to cover many of their uninsured workers.

Westlund also worked last session to decrease our dependency on foreign oil by expanding solar tax credits. He was disappointed that partisan gridlock prevented the passage of a biofuels package and has since signed on to an initiative with former Governor John Kitzhaber (D) to increase biofuel production and renewable energy projects across Oregon.

“I’m hopeful about the future of Oregon. As I talk with Oregonians around the state, I’m encouraged by the support I’m seeing. Every day people, from both sides of the aisle are asking me to run for Governor, not as a member of a party, but as an Oregonian. Oregonians may not agree with me 100% on every issue but they want leaders who are courageous about important issues like health care and fair taxes. They’re ready for solutions and they appreciate that I’m actually offering some.”

■■■

# BEN WESTLUND

---

## FOR GOVERNOR



## BEN'S BIOGRAPHY

Ben Westlund, born in 1949, moved to Oregon as a teenager and finished high school in Oregon. He graduated from Whitman College with a BA in education and history and continued his graduate studies at the University of Oregon. In 1974, he moved to Central Oregon and helped found an innovative company that made non toxic, safe substances from the crushed shells of marine life. The product is used extensively in farming and in the care of animals. After selling that successful business, Ben went into cattle-breeding, the proud owner of a prize winning bull, Reggie.

In 1996 when considering a career change to nursing, a friend suggested Ben run for the legislature. Concerned that a misspent youth would be a mark against him, Ben went public with the story of his alcohol and drug problems and subsequent recovery. A tireless campaigner who connected well with people, Ben was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives where he quickly earned respect for his grasp of issues and for his ability to work with people across the political spectrum.

In 1999, Westlund passed "Fallen Officers' Fund" legislation that makes convicted criminals who put officers at risk financially assist families of public safety officers killed and critically injured in the line of duty.

In 2001 he was named co-chair of the budget-writing Joint Ways and Means Committee. When Oregon's economy spiraled downward during the recession and armed with his knowledge of the state budget, Westlund led a bipartisan effort forced to cut \$1.3 billion over five special sessions.

Westlund was the architect, and now serves on the board, of the Oregon Cultural Trust, an innovative public private partnership designed to preserve and strengthen culture for all Oregonians.

In 2003, Westlund chaired the committee charged with saving the Oregon Health Plan from extinction. His concerns for healthcare turned personal when Ben was diagnosed with lung cancer. Two weeks later he received statewide attention when he returned to the floor of the legislature and called for legislators to ***"stop being mere politicians who think only of the next election, and start being statesmen who think only of the next generation."***

In the final days of the 2003 session Ben Westlund was appointed to the Senate to finish the term of Bev Clarno. In the 2004 election, in addition to receiving the Republican nomination, Westlund won the Democratic nomination with over a thousand write-in votes and received over 80% of the final votes cast.

Believing Oregon's tax structure to be the most volatile in the nation and a disincentive for capital job investment, Westlund served as vice-chair on a 2003 interim joint committee to examine our over-reliance on a fluctuating income tax. The efforts were co-opted in a partisan struggle, and the chance to fix our broken tax structure slipped away.

During the 2005 legislative session, Ben championed efforts to decrease healthcare costs and to increase access. He was chief sponsor of a bill to create civil unions and extend non-discrimination laws to all Oregonians. Believing that party labels often lead to uncompromising ideology, he also advocated for a nonpartisan legislature. A proponent of alternative energy, he was instrumental in expanding the solar energy tax credit.

Today, Ben serves as chair for Central Oregon Special Olympics, and he is a board member for Trillium Family Services and is on the OSU-Cascades Advisory Board. He is also involved in 4-H and Future Farmers of America, Caring for Our Troops on the Oregon Health Policy Commission. He also serves on the Executive Committee of the National Conference of State Legislators.

Professionally, Ben consults on increasing efficiencies in healthcare. He and his wife Libby, who serves on the Mount Bachelor National Ski Patrol, have two children: a son B.J. (17) and a daughter Taylor (13).





## BEN'S LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

### LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

▶ **Fallen Officers' Bill: Public Safety Memorial Fund (1999)**

Sets aside additional court penalties to provide benefits and assistance to families of public safety officers killed in the line of duty. Funded at no expense to taxpayers, the Memorial Fund provides immediate assistance as well as help with longer-term costs. (HB 2391)

▶ **Oregon Cultural Trust (2001)**

Ben established a tax credit for direct contributions to the Oregon Trust for Cultural Development, a long-term public/ private funding initiative designed to preserve and strengthen culture for all Oregonians. As an early architect of the Trust, Ben now sits on the Board. (HB 2923)

▶ **Ways & Means Co-Chair (2001)**

Ben served as the Chairman of Ways and Means Committee in the State Legislature, where he led the efforts to cut over \$1 billion from the state budget during the economic downturn a few years ago.

▶ **OSU Cascades (2001)**

Ben spearheaded the effort to create and fund a brand new campus of OSU in Bend.

▶ **Medical Assistance Program (2003)**

Ben co-authored HB 3624, reforming the Oregon Health Plan. The reforms helped to save the Oregon Health Plan by finding efficiencies within the system and recovering millions of dollars.

▶ **Solar Tax Credits (2005)**

As a proponent of alternative energy, Ben was instrumental in expanding the solar energy tax credit during the 2005 session. The bill passed with overwhelming support. (SB 31)

▶ **Civil Unions (2005)**

As an author and primary sponsor of SB 1000, Ben fought all session to bring equal rights to all of Oregon's families.

### INITIATIVES

▶ **Oregon Open Primary**

Allows all Oregonians to vote in primary elections for the candidate of their choice, regardless of party.

▶ **HOPE For Oregon Families**

Makes access to basic health care a constitutional right. The legislature must plan to extend primary and preventative health care by 2009.

▶ **Family Health and Wellness Act**

Provides health care for uninsured children and more working families through small-business employers by raising tobacco taxes.

▶ **Apollo: New Energy for Oregon**

Expands Oregon's renewable energy market, decreases dependence on foreign oil and creates good paying jobs.



## INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: How does an independent run for governor?**

An independent candidate must gather just over 18,000 valid signatures by the end of August to qualify for the November ballot.

**Q: Will the new law (HB 2614) prevent independents from qualifying?**

No, but the people who are eligible to sign is now more limited. Formerly, any registered Oregon voter could sign a petition to qualify an independent for the ballot. Now, the signatures of registered Democrats and Republicans who vote in their party's primary can't be counted towards the goal.

**Q: Can an independent win?**

Yes. Research demonstrates successful Independent races are won by candidates who tap into the broad middle of the electorate. Success is possible in states with high non-affiliated voter registration, high voter turn-out and where there is either a deep dissatisfaction with the choices in a particular race or a deep dissatisfaction with the state of affairs generally. A combination of those factors creates a perfect storm opportunity for independent candidates.

**Q: Can an independent governor be effective?**

Yes. Julius Meier became Oregon's first independent governor during the Great Depression, facing record debt and unemployment levels. Within four years, he worked with both Republicans and Democrats to wipe out the state debt, draw New Deal projects to Oregon to put people to work, lower taxes, and establish the Oregon State Police.

---

## Why Ben Should Run

---

Ben Westlund, the independent-minded (some would say "maverick") Republican state senator from the Bend area, has earned a reputation for shaking things up in the legislature.

Right now Westlund is shaking things up on the statewide political scene by giving strong indications that he'll run for governor as an independent in 2006.

We hope he does.

That doesn't mean we're endorsing Westlund at this point. We don't even know who his opponents will be if he does run. Incumbent Democrat Ted Kulongoski faces several strong challengers and potential challengers, including popular former Gov. John Kitzhaber. And while he's still considered the Republican frontrunner, Kevin Mannix--who's already lost twice to Democratic candidates--is in a contested race too.

We're encouraging Westlund to run because, first, he's a breath of fresh air in a political atmosphere that has been polluted for too long by petty partisanship, and, second, because a strong run by an independent would send a message to the two major parties that they're out of touch with mainstream Oregonians and they'd better get their act together or be reduced to irrelevancy.

A win by Westlund, or any independent, would be a long shot but by no means an impossibility: Think of Jesse Ventura in Minnesota.

On second thought, scratch that. Ben Westlund is not a former pro wrestler who became famous by prancing around in a pink feather boa; he's a serious and seasoned politician with a strong track record in Salem and a clear understanding of the state's problems.

His record is that of a lawmaker who's able to work both sides of the aisle to forge consensus. He's also proven that he's guided by principle rather than party loyalty or dogmatic ideology. A prime example was his gutsy support for SB 1000, which would have allowed civil unions for same-sex couples.

In an interview with the Source Weekly, Westlund demonstrated his grasp of the core problem confronting Oregon: the lack of a stable revenue source. Until the state stops relying almost exclusively on the personal income tax, all of its other problems--education, health care, public safety--will remain intractable.

On this and other crucial issues, Kulongoski has been--to use Westlund's term--AWOL. Oregonians can't--and, we believe, won't--tolerate four more years of a leadership vacuum in the governor's office. Nor are most of them enthusiastic about Mannix's brand of right-wing extremism. That explains why there's so much statewide interest in a Westlund candidacy--and why Westlund might have a legitimate shot.

He should take that shot. Win or lose, we believe Oregon politics will be better because of it.

# The Oregonian

EDITORIAL

AUGUST 24, 2005

## The more the merrier

---

A year from now Oregon voters may look at their choices for governor as a scoop of vanilla or a second scoop of vanilla. But there is a possibility that voters could see state Sen. Ben Westlund on the ballot as an independent.

He is a whole other flavor.

Westlund is a left-leaning Republican with rural roots, a love of politics and a quirky, independent record. Is Oregon ready for a governor who speaks with equal passion for gun rights and the civil rights of homosexuals?

In any scenario, a Westlund candidacy would be a long shot. He is unknown outside his home in the Central Oregon community of Tumalo, and his home away from home, the state Capitol. But it would sure be interesting -- and not just for the reporters who trailed him -- if Westlund did run for governor.

Westlund is a lung cancer survivor. He had surgery two years ago, and says recent tests have shown him to be free of the disease. He came back from cancer with less patience than ever for partisan politics as usual. Today he is the nearest facsimile in Oregon politics to the mythical beast that independent voters often tell

pollsters they are looking for: a pro-education, pro-business moderate willing to buck his party.

Westlund has credentials. He's a former co-chairman of the Legislature's budget-writing Ways and Means Committee. He's as knowledgeable as anyone on tax and budget issues, and on Oregon's troubled health care system.

But he's been on the losing side of every recent tax debate. He's tilted at the windmills of tax reform and full funding for schools. He has so infuriated conservatives by supporting civil unions for gays and lesbians that some of his constituents are talking recall.

Westlund has no chance of emerging from a Republican primary in a state where GOP voters keep stubbornly nominating conservatives -- Kevin Mannix, Bill Sizemore and Denny Smith -- and keep losing to Democrats.

Yet Westlund could go his own way as an independent candidate. It would be a bold step, an unlikely campaign unpopular with his party.

It sounds just like Ben Westlund.

■ ■ ■

---

# The Oregonian

By JEFF MAPES

JUNE 3, 2005

## An inclination to color outside party lines

---

SALEM - No other Republican legislator in the Capitol had a week like Sen. Ben Westlund of Tumalo.

On Tuesday, the Central Oregon lawmaker and two Democratic colleagues filed a ballot initiative declaring that affordable health care is "a fundamental right."

On Wednesday, Westlund joined Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski at a rally with a union-backed group fighting the pharmaceutical industry over expanding a drug-purchasing pool.

And on Thursday, the Bend Bulletin newspaper reported that conservative activists might try to recall Westlund because of his ardent support for civil unions.

Westlund has his Republican side, too, as you'll learn if you talk to the NRA. But Westlund, more than any other legislator this session, routinely defies party lines.

Not long ago, this would be unremarkable. Republicans such as Gov. Tom McCall and Sen. Mark Hatfield once dominated state politics from the broad middle.

But the widening partisan split and the growing reliance on special interest campaign cash has increasingly forced legislators to stick close to their party caucuses.

Westlund is now the biggest exception to the rule. He's often been the sole Republican voting for Democratic bills, ranging from the drug-purchasing plan to collective bargaining rights.

He's berated legislators of both stripes for failing to tackle tax reform. And he's not afraid to use talk about a sales tax.

"Common sense would tell you that living in the middle -- being a moderate -- would be the most secure political ground," he says. "Regrettably that's not true anymore. It's the extremes that have the most political protection."

Westlund, 55, has always been a contrarian. The self-described black sheep of a well-to-do family, he made his way to Central Oregon where he helped found a company that sold diatomaceous earth, used in cat box litter among other things. Later, he went into the cattle-breeding business, cold-calling ranchers to sell bull semen.

Westlund won a House seat in 1996 and quickly showed he had a knack for

understanding complex issues and for developing relations on both sides of the aisle. He became the House budget chief in 2001. He may have been independent, but he was also a key insider.

Later that year, the economy tanked and sent the budget into a tailspin. Westlund was in the front lines of fashioning a tax package that voters later rejected.

In 2003, the new House Speaker Karen Minnis, R-Wood Village, shunted Westlund aside and gave the budget position to a reliable conservative.

Just a few months later, Westlund was diagnosed with lung cancer. Still weak from surgery and chemotherapy, Westlund returned to give a fiery speech demanding that legislators fix Oregon's boom-and-bust tax system "right here on this floor, right now."

That didn't happen, but Westlund and a group of fellow Republican moderates -- called the "usual suspects" -- joined Democrats to pass another temporary tax increase. Voters shot that down, too.

Westlund was appointed to a Senate vacancy in late 2003. He says he's regaining much of his precancer ebullience. But the experience clearly changed him.

He wakes up blessing his family and the simple fact he's alive. "After that, the politics in this building, they pale in comparison"

His passion for universal access to health care has deepened. Human suffering, he says, "is bad enough, but unnecessary suffering is even worse."

Like most legislators, Westlund thinks of higher office. Unlike most, he doesn't rule out the idea of running as an independent. That might be his only alternative, given his increasing estrangement from the Republican base.

Or he might stay in the Senate.

"If the Senate is any closer (between the Democrats and Republicans) next time, his vote could become very critical," says Rep. Mitch Greenlick, D-Portland, one Westlund ally. "If I were the Democratic leader of a 16-14 Senate, Ben would have a chairmanship."

■ ■ ■

## EDITORIAL SUPPORT FOR 2004 SENATE CAMPAIGN: Return Ben Westlund to Oregon Senate

---

Sen. Ben Westlund, R-Dist. 27, fairly breezed through the May primary this year, easily garnering enough votes from his own party and enough Democratic write-in votes to win both parties' nomination for this fall's election. His only challenger is Don Loyd of the Constitution Party.

Westlund should be returned to the Senate. A member of the Legislature since 1997, he has become an expert on Oregon's tax structure and a leader for reforms aimed at providing a more balanced revenue stream to state coffers. That, in turn, would help to soften both the highs and lows of recent years by reducing reliance on state income taxes.

Westlund was appointed to the Senate to fill the seat vacated when Bev Clarno took a job with the Bush administration. It was an auspicious shift - a committed centrist on all sorts of issues, Westlund always ran the risk of being isolated by his more conservative fellows in the state House of Representatives.

His knowledge of taxes and related issues, meanwhile, assured he would be listened to when he shifted to the upper chamber.

He is a longtime Central Oregonian, a resident of Tumalo. The father of two children, Westlund is a graduate of Whitman College in Washington.

He attended high school in the Portland area. In Central Oregon the list of community causes to which he has committed his time is extensive. He served on his children's school board and has been active in both 4-H and the Future Farmers of America. He has supported the High Desert Museum, St. Charles Medical Center and the Deschutes County Fair and Expo Association. He continues to advocate for higher education in the area.

Westlund brings an almost unmatched willingness to work to his Senate seat. He has, as noted above, made himself a leading expert on Oregon's taxes and related issues. He has spent countless hours between legislative sessions on such matters, despite, in recent months, suffering from health problems. He shows no signs of slacking off in the months ahead.

Deschutes County is well served by Westlund, the dean of the local legislative delegation. He has stature among his fellows and is willing to use it to benefit his constituents and, in fact, all Oregonians. With virtually everyone else from the area new to the job, we need Westlund and his experience.

■ ■ ■

---

## Paying It Forward

Lives of Hope, Success, and Freedom From Addiction Distinguish De Paul Freedom Award Winners

---

### Ben Westlund

Co-winner of the 2002 Freedom Award,  
with fellow state legislator Lenn Hannon

"Two things I'm thankful for that I'm not burdened with," says Westlund. "I don't have to know where my cancer came from—secondhand smoke, agricultural chemicals. A lot of people need to know... I don't care.

"The other is that while I was drinking I never got in one of those wrecks. I never hurt anybody. It was just there, but for the grace of God, go I," Westlund says emphatically. "One left turn, one right turn, one half-second delayed response and I could have been there. Those two things I am eternally grateful for."

The cancer Westlund refers to hit him many years after his recovery from alcoholism, while he was working in the legislature. "I didn't fit the profile for lung cancer because I didn't smoke, never smoked."

"They did cancer surgery on May 16, 2003 and I went back to the session, did chemo, did the radiation.

"September 3, 2003 was one of the great days of my life," says Westlund. "It was the last day of the session, my last day of chemo, results from my first CT scan showing things looked pretty good, and it was my 54th birthday.

Now for some people a battle with alcoholism, followed by another with cancer might seem like a heavy dose of bad luck. But more was on the way. Weakened by radiation, Westlund's windpipe became infected, and likely due to prescribed steroids, last November Westlund's colon ruptured, requiring emergency abdominal surgery. Now, weakened abdominal muscles from that surgery have caused a hernia. But Westlund laughs it all off, happy to be in improving health and moving forward. "It's a glide slope down," jokes Westlund. "When I get down to a hang nail next year, no problem."

That just-for-today optimism, and forward-thinking attitude are a recurring theme with all five Freedom Award winners.

### Pay It Forward

In the 1999 Warner Bros. movie, "Pay It Forward," Kevin Spacey plays a teacher whose devastating life story confirms that some tragedies cannot be redeemed.

...

All five Freedom Award winners have found ways to "pay it forward" in their lives. Rather than dwell in past or present dilemmas, these well-known Oregon leaders look for ways to pay forward to others in need. But first each has had to beat his or her own demons.

### Going Public

In recovery for 24 years, Westlund was 31 when he got sober. "What a blessing," says Westlund. "The most genius words I've ever heard are Bill W.'s (Bill Wilson, one of the founders of AA), 'You can't keep what you've got unless you give it away.' For an alcoholic that's exactly what it is. I get so much satisfaction helping various people along the way. I don't go out of my way to find them—they just kind of find me."

For Westlund, recovery was a combination of chance, fate, fortuity. "Libby (his wife) and my mom were saying, 'Why Ben, why? Why do you drink?' It was the intensity of the emotions that I felt... music, poetry, whatever. I wasn't a violent drunk, I

wasn't a partier, although I did my share of that. I liked being by myself pretty much, and thinking. It was the intensity of those thoughts.

"Somehow one morning, pretty hung over, I found a card that my mom left for a treatment center in Washington, and I called. They didn't have a place.

"I woke up the second morning still hung over. Now I'm calling those bastards again. I was able to talk my way in. I chartered a plane—I didn't trust myself to drive there. The pilot drops me off in a pouring rainstorm at a little airport—the only thing there is a phone booth. I call a cab and when the cabbie gets there he's drunker than I am. I thought, this is divine justice. I'm going to die at the hands of a drunken cabbie on the way to alcohol rehab.

"But, God bless him, he made it. I made it.

"We know what to do. Treatment works. Recovery happens."

For Westlund, living in the small town of Mitchell, anonymity was always an open question. "Even though we all think no one knew how much we drank," says Westlund, "everyone knew. So it was kinda big news in Mitchell when I was going up to a treatment center. When you're coming home, you think, gosh I hope nobody knows.

"Hell, everyone knows and everyone is patting you on the back, saying thank God, good for him...it's about time.

"As I was approaching getting into public life, anonymity was a dilemma for me. What do I do? Will someone throw mud at me for this? The question was answered for me in summer of '96. The phone rings—it's an Oregonian reporter. First question. 'Have you ever been arrested?' It was fight or flight. 'Well sure, hasn't everybody?'" I answered.

"From the time I said those words it was very easy for me. 'What did you get arrested for?' 'Well, drunk driving, kinda.' 'Kinda?' 'Well I was pulled off to the side of the road changing a tire.'

"But that's not why he was calling. 'Ben, do you know who arrested you?' "I said, 'No.'

"Does the name John Minnis mean anything to you? State legislator John Minnis. Do you realize that if you win your race, you'll be serving in the legislature with the guy that arrested you for drunk driving?'

"We both laughed."

The headline that ran a few days later read something like, "Officer and man he arrested may serve time in the big house together." And, of course, they did.

"When Minnis arrested me that was my personal bottom," says Westlund. "A Portland beat cop just doing his job really helped someone turn his life around and become a productive member of the community. It all comes together—law enforcement, personal resolve, and access to resources.

"But it wasn't until I got involved in public policy 16–17 years later," admits Westlund, "that I started to have the conscious connection between the number of facilities, the magnitude of the need, versus what was available. Back then, hell, it could have been the only one on the West Coast for all I knew.

"Other approaches may work for others. But if you've tried to quit three or four times and it hasn't worked, read the writing on the wall—maybe you need a more professional approach."



## Westlund speaks on partisanship in the Legislature

---

SALEM -- Several speeches that echoed in the Oregon Senate chamber last week urged lawmakers to delete party labels from all of the state's offices.

Ultimately, the chamber endorsed the bill and sent it to the House.

But as Sen. Ben Westlund, R-Tumalo, stood at his microphone, his remarks offered something else: perhaps a glimpse into the psyche of the Legislature's most independent Republican, and more than a hint of frustration.

He doesn't think Oregonians look in the mirror and see themselves as partisans -- and he doesn't see himself that way, either.

"There are many ways that Oregonians describe themselves, but one of the least important -- the least representative of our true selves -- are those little letters that follow our names: D or R," he said. "How can two letters accurately describe the depth of our emotion, the complexity of our opinions, the strength of our values and the individuality of the human spirit?"

A moderate Republican, Westlund has been oft labeled a "Republican in Name Only" for sponsoring legislation to create civil unions for same-sex couples, for creating the Oregon Cultural Trust and for supporting new taxes to help pay for schools and human services programs.

In several instances this session, he has cast the lone Republican vote along with majority Democrats in the chamber.

It happened again on Friday, when Westlund was the only Republican to support a bill that would spend \$150,000 and allow more people to participate in the state's prescription drug-buying pool, which makes pharmaceuticals available for less money.

Westlund was summoned to a closed-door meeting last week with the executive board of the Deschutes County Republican Central Committee, in which he was denounced for his support of civil unions.

"As members of our party, we are expected to pay homage to every line in our party's platform," he said in his floor speech, seemingly in response to that meeting and the angry e-mails he receives from fellow Republicans. "How reasonable is that expectation?"

Westlund bristles at much of the criticism, especially in light of his efforts over the years on behalf of Republican candidates and causes. He was a key player and fundraiser behind Kevin Mannix's gubernatorial run in 2002.

But political parties have less patience for people who don't toe the party line, said Jim Moore, a political science professor at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

"Especially on the West Coast, parties used to be called umbrella parties and were very tolerant, but those umbrellas are getting smaller and smaller on both sides," he said. "For instance, abortion is a litmus test for both Republicans and Democrats."

He said moderate legislators are a "disappearing breed" in Oregon, even though they clearly represent the electorate better than partisans.

"But with our primary system, the people who get elected are the ones who better represent the party faithful."

Westlund won re-election in November with 82 percent of the vote, but had no challenger in the May 2004 primary.

"Oregonians need representation that mirrors the complexity of who we are, not blind adherence to the party," he said. "Who we are is: What we do, how we feel, what we think and who we love. It's what makes us unique and independent."

Afterward, he did not answer directly when asked if he's ever mulled changing his party affiliation. But he smiled.

"I pledge allegiance to the people," he said.

■ ■ ■

---



## From the Desk of Representative Ben Westlund

### “Return from the Hospital”

Delivered June 2, 2003 on the floor of the Oregon State House

---

One word and a few thoughts I'd like to share with us. The word is: "present." And colleagues you'll have no idea how, of the many thousands of words I have said on this floor, I have longed to say that one word.

And you'll never know . can never know . how the love and the support, the calls, the letters that came from this very chamber, this building, and indeed from around the state, have given Libby and I and the children courage to deal with this time of trial. I stand before you extraordinarily grateful and a truly humbled man.

As many of you know, the reason for my absence was cancer. One of the worst kinds, lung cancer. And while the surgeons are confident they got it all, they cannot with 100 percent assurance, know that no malignant cells remain.

So I will very shortly begin an aggressive regimen of radiation, chemotherapy and a new drug called Arissa.

Let me, so you don't have to ask, be blunt. Well, maybe not that blunt. Denial does have its purpose. Let me just say there is the possibility I may not be able to be with us next session. But the silver lining in these very dark clouds is I have been afforded a rare opportunity not usually enjoyed by a sitting legislator during a time of crisis. And that is, in simplest terms, I have been able to step back from the trees far enough to be able to see Oregon's forest . what Nietzsche would call the intimate acuity of distance.

So let me be as blunt I think, about Oregon's health as I have with my own. Oregon is facing its own life and death struggle. And it is not up to some surgeon, some gifted surgeon, to save her. It is up to us. Oregonians are looking to us to do the job they elected us to do.

They're not looking to the initiative process. They are not looking to some interim committee. They're looking to us . because it is unacceptable to Oregonians that we have the shortest school year in the country and that we have become the brunt of national humor.

It is unacceptable to Oregonians that we're closing courts, letting prisoners out of jail and wheeling grandmothers out of nursing homes. It is unacceptable to Oregonians that we are denying life-saving medical services to our most frail and vulnerable populations. That is unacceptable to me and I pray it is unacceptable to all of us.

Colleagues, it is insane that we continue to fund these vital services with a tax structure that in good times produces too much revenue and in bad falls further and faster than any other state in the union save one.

It is disingenuous of us to bemoan Oregon's highest-in-the-nation unemployment rate without systematically looking at the business regulations, the most onerous business regulations in the nation, that stifle our citizens will to achieve.

We will not have finished our work here if we have not systematically looked at every delivery system for every efficiency we can find in trying to more effectively deliver the services that Oregonians hold most dear. And let's be honest with ourselves and our fellow Oregonians, that permanent, stable, sustainable and fair revenue is also part of the big-picture solution.

I recognize colleagues very well that we all come from diverse geographic areas in this state and as individuals we are the sum total of the lives that lead us here. And I equally recognize that we come from diverse districts that many times have conflicting interests, but that the genius and the challenge of representative democracy is to find the best public policy and to forge the consensus out of that inherent conflict.

That is what Oregonians are expecting us to do. Oregonians are expecting us to solve the problems that are facing our great state. It is up to us to do the right thing, right here on this floor, right now.

As you might imagine, my prayers are a little longer these days. I pray for Libby and the well-being of the children. I certainly pray for my health. And I like many Oregonians pray for us, pray that we may stop being mere politicians who think only of the next election, and start being statesmen who think only of the next generation.

Colleagues nothing survives but the way we live our lives.

It is great to be back.