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## **Westlund Campaign Submits First Batch of Signatures to Counties Over 36,000 Oregonians Support Westlund's Campaign to Get on the Ballot**

Bend, OR- (July 24, 2006) Senator Ben Westlund's quest to qualify for the fall ballot as an Independent candidate for Governor reaches a major milestone this week as the campaign begins submitting signatures to county clerks for signature verification. The campaign has already gathered over 36,000 signatures statewide and needs to submit 18,368 valid signatures to the Secretary of State by August 29 to qualify for a spot on the November ballot.

"We have launched one of the most comprehensive statewide grassroots campaigns in the history of Oregon," said Westlund. "Establishing and maintaining direct contact with Oregon's voters is a huge advantage for us and the tens of thousands of signatures we have obtained so far is a product of our top-notch team of statewide staff and volunteers."

The campaign will begin by turning in the first batch of signatures in Deschutes County on Tuesday afternoon, Multnomah County on Wednesday afternoon and Lane County on Thursday morning. The campaign has collected signatures from all 36 of Oregon's counties and plans to spend the next few weeks gathering more to account for those that may be ruled invalid.

"We want to give every Oregonian the opportunity to sign our petition," added Westlund. "This growing statewide movement is about more than my candidacy, it's about responsibility, about reforming Oregon's unstable and unfair tax structure and it's about renewing our commitment to this great state we love to call home."

As a State Representative and Senator, Westlund has an established track record of taking on tough issues, and for several sessions he has been leading the fight to fix Oregon's tax structure to strengthen the economy, create jobs and stabilize school funding. Currently, over 70% of the general fund revenue the state uses for schools, public safety and healthcare comes from the most volatile tax, the income tax. "For far too long we have balanced our books on the backs of hard working Oregonians and when that wasn't enough, we borrowed. Oregon has to get its fiscal house in order before we can make any promises or plans for the future."

A successful entrepreneur and agri-businessman, Westlund has served 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 2003 session to fill a vacancy in the Senate and was elected to the seat in November 2004, receiving both the Democratic and Republican nominations and over 80% of the votes cast. Westlund, who has a reputation for building consensus, left the Republican Party in February to run for governor as an Independent, he said because "extreme partisan politics is keeping us from solving Oregon's problems."