

Ben Westlund Tops \$100,000 100 Volunteers in Week 1

Bend, Ore - Feb 23, 2006 Oregon Senator Ben Westlund (I) attracted significant support in his first week as financial pledges and contributions passed the \$100,000 mark Wednesday afternoon. Over 100 volunteers have also registered online to help gather over 18,000 valid signatures he needs by August 2006 to qualify for the ballot.

The financial support came from over seventy contributors including \$4,000 raised through Westlund's website (www.benwestlund.com). The petition sheets to place him on the November ballot are available on his website.

Westlund Humbled by Response

"I am extremely grateful for the support of people who know me and believe in my ability to bring people together, regardless of party, to solve real problems for real Oregonians. I have been amazed by the outpouring of support from people around the state who are ready for decisive leadership and vision," said Westlund.

A lung cancer survivor, Westlund brought many in the capitol to tears and signaled a transition in his approach to governing when, in June 2003, he returned from the hospital with an impassioned speech where he pleaded **"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."**

The 2005 session was the final tipping point for the already frustrated Westlund. After sponsoring several measures to provide health care for those that don't have it and lower costs for those that do, the bills failed because of "extreme partisanship and a lack of leadership." Those measures included prescription pooling for businesses, a cigarette tax to cover uninsured children, and several to increase consumer's control of medical costs.

That partisanship drove Westlund to drop party affiliation and launch two bipartisan health care initiatives. The HOPE for Oregon Families initiative, 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 immediate access to basic health care to all Oregon children and provides subsidies to small employers to cover many of their uninsured workers by implementing a 60¢ cigarette tax.

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. Westlund also aided in the creation of the Oregon Open Primary Initiative which aims to open Oregon's primaries to all voters. Further information on the initiatives Westlund is supporting can be found on his website.

A successful small businessman, Westlund has served in the state legislature since 1997, and was elected first as state representative from rural Central Oregon. As 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 to achieve compromise and find solutions.



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