

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).

