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## QuickPoint! - House Bills on Oregon Water Resources to Double Dip Taxpayers

By Madilynne Clark

[House Bill 2808](#) and [House Bill 2165](#) seek to address the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) budget shortfall of \$875,000, but through different methods. Instead of choosing which bill offers the best path towards good governance, the legislature is saying, “both.” [HB 2808](#) would increase the permitting and licensing fees related to wells. [HB 2165](#) would provide an increase in funding to OWRD from the general fund of \$830,415.

Initially proposed as a one-or-the-other approach, the current recommendation from the committee is that both bills are needed, with no downsizing. The solution addressed by these bills is critical to the [one-in-four](#) Oregonians relying on domestic wells. But well owners, not taxpayers, should pay for increased employment costs at OWRD. Permit fees are a means of ensuring that the agency has a fiscal responsibility to process applications, versus relying on a one-time bailout from the general fund that has no statutory requirements for processing applications.

When fees are required by law, project beneficiaries should pay the price, not taxpayers. Fee increases should be permitted only when agencies can show increasing employment costs, increasing demand for processors, and that no agency rulemaking has created obstacles to processing. In the case of OWRD, funding increases are needed, but this should come from landowners wanting a new well, not unsuspecting taxpayers who are already paying their own monthly water bills.

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