

Submitter: Gary Wilhelms
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SCR10

My first conversation with Peter Courtney was on the elevator in the House Wing in early January 1981 after his election to the House but before he was sworn in as a new State Representative. I had resigned my seat in the House and had only been lobbying for a year. I liked him but could tell he wasn't sure whether or not he should like me. That was pretty much the relationship we maintained until I retired from lobbying and eventually found myself, during 2003 through 2006, sitting in many, many meetings with Peter and his Chief of Staff, Connie Seeley, and House Speaker Karen Minnis when I was fortunate enough to be her Chief of Staff.

While always entertaining, it was sometimes difficult to be sure whether Peter was really so often angry. I finally got to the point where I just assumed he wasn't, but you did that at your own peril because once in a great while, he really was angry. While we may not always have agreed politically, I have always enjoyed my various encounters with Peter. He was old-school tough, and he was a very competent, trustworthy politician and political leader.

The last issue that I felt privileged to work on with Peter was the Capitol Master Plan for renovation and seismic upgrading of this building. I had gotten involved as a staffer in 2005 and as the Building Committee Chair of the Oregon State Capitol Foundation. Peter was a supporter and tried repeatedly to secure funding for the project. At one point, he proposed that in order to gain approval, he and I might go on the road together, he as the Democrat political leader and me as the Republican civilian taxpayer. I'm sorry we didn't get to do that. Funding for the project and the project itself became more complicated. Eventually, and with a different approach, the project has been funded, and we will all enjoy the final result early next year. I honestly don't know if the project would yet be underway without Peter Courtney's leadership.

Peter's list of accomplishments, both in and out of politics, is lengthy. I'm sure you will hear about many of them today. Oregon is better today because of his leadership and the support he received from Margie and their kids. We all miss him. Please pass SCR 10.

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