

CURTIS WRIGHT
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May 9, 2025

RE: SB 5531 - Urgent Need to Fund the Reopening of Osborn Aquatic Center in Corvallis

Dear Co-Chair Senator Girod, Co-Chair Representative Nosse, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully urge you to prioritize capital construction funding for reopening the Osborn Aquatic Center in Corvallis. This essential public facility offers far more than recreation. Osborn is a regional hub for public health, youth development, water safety, and economic activity. Its continued closure poses a public safety concern and is a missed opportunity for economic revitalization, community wellness, and statewide equity.

Osborn has long been the primary venue for swimming lessons, lifeguard training, rehabilitation exercise, and recreational programs in Benton County. Each year, thousands of children have relied on Osborn for access to affordable, high-quality swim instruction—an essential life skill in a state defined by its rivers, lakes, and coastline. Its closure leaves a dangerous gap: Oregon’s youth now face a greater risk of drowning, one of the state’s leading causes of accidental death for children. Seniors, individuals recovering from injury, and those with mobility challenges have lost access to one of the few therapeutic water environments in the region.

But Osborn is also an economic engine. Its indoor competition pool has been a premier venue for hosting regional and statewide swim meets, regularly drawing athletes, coaches, and families from all corners of Oregon. These events bring hundreds of visitors to Corvallis, generating significant local revenue for hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and small businesses. A typical weekend meet fills lodging across the area and contributes to vibrant local commerce—dollars that now go elsewhere or are lost altogether.

I served five years on the board of directors for Visit Corvallis, including two years as chair. I understand the challenges of attracting more visitors to our city. Additionally, I spent eleven years on the City of Corvallis Budget Commission, chairing for nine of those years. I am acutely aware of our city's significant financial challenges in funding essential services. Osborn is an important economic catalyst for Corvallis.


Moreover, Osborn is a vital asset for recruiting and retention at Oregon State University and among local employers. Families considering a move to Corvallis expect access to high-quality recreational amenities for their children. A vibrant aquatic center indicates a healthy, thriving, family-friendly community. Without it, Corvallis loses competitive ground in attracting new talent and retaining current residents, especially young families, who may seek communities with more robust public infrastructure.

It’s also important to emphasize that Osborn has historically served a diverse cross-section of residents, including low-income families who may be unable to afford private swim clubs or travel to out-of-town facilities. Reopening Osborn supports equitable access to water safety and physical activity, regardless of income, age, or background.

This is a wise and timely investment. The need is urgent, the infrastructure is already in place, and the community is united in its desire to restore this essential asset. The longer Osborn remains closed, the greater the social and economic costs to our region—and the more challenging it becomes to reopen at all.

I urge you to stand with Corvallis and the surrounding communities. Please allocate the necessary funding to reopen the Osborn Aquatic Center and restore this cornerstone of safety, wellness, and economic vitality for mid-Willamette Valley residents and families across the state.

Sincerely,



Curtis Wright