

Following are summary remarks made by Senator Kurt Schrader, co-chair of the Ways and Means Committee, directed at the other committee members, just before they voted to include the \$200 million UO arena bond authorization in the omnibus committee bill that will be taken up by the full legislature in February.

Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means
January 17, 2008

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I'll make a few comments just to get in the queue with everyone else.

Having been in this body for a number of years, it's been the practice generally to not use taxpayer dollars to support athletic programs at any of our community colleges or university systems. And I think that's what we have before us today. That's a positive message to your constituents. We are not using taxpayer dollars – your taxes – to support athletics in this state.

What's better yet about this particular project is it's trying to be self-sustaining. I would hope we have more projects like this coming forward. That should be another message to your constituents. Rather than being afraid of their questions, you can respond thoughtfully that this is exactly the type of leadership we need to have to make sure that your taxpayer dollars can go to academic programs in these type of times.

The other piece that I think is great is – this is creative. Now we're always talking about – at least I'm always talking about – continuous improvement, thinking about doing things in different ways without spending more money, adjust of caseload inflation, current services – this is great. I think this is very thoughtful. Now being thoughtful is good. Being careful is also good. Our legislative fiscal staff has super-analyzed this, super-sized it, in a way that I feel is – as long as we include this letter that we got this morning – that it is not their intent to go to the general fund at all.

The real world is there is always risk in anything we do. But I think this is actually worthwhile pursuing with the letter, with the addendum, with fiscal staff's analysis. And I think we should be aggressive in a positive way with our constituents, saying; you may be misunderstood by the press, you might be misunderstood by certain interest groups, but in the real world here, this is taking athletics off the taxpayer's dime and is a real thoughtful, positive way – probably putting more money, economic development money, into the community to pay for other things that we all need and desire.

So I think while the tenor of the questions has been excellent and we've made them do their due diligence, I think it's important for us to feel pretty darn good about this type of thing going forward, especially as it has been extremely well vetted.

I want members to feel pretty comfortable. The last piece is -- say the sky falls in, we have the worst recession we've had, the worst depression since the 1929 depression and

they feel they have to come back with a different plan, it doesn't have to be general funds. There are other funds sources.

Now we've referenced the Legacy Fund here – the University's budget, if you've been in the Ways and Means for a while, they've got lots of other fund sources. They may not like us talking about that (laughter), but there are other sources. So it's not automatic that the taxpayer is on the hook. So I just want to make sure you guys feel comfortable and can positively respond to your constituents that this is actually a good thing – we should have more of this going on in our state.

Okay, end of my soliloquy.