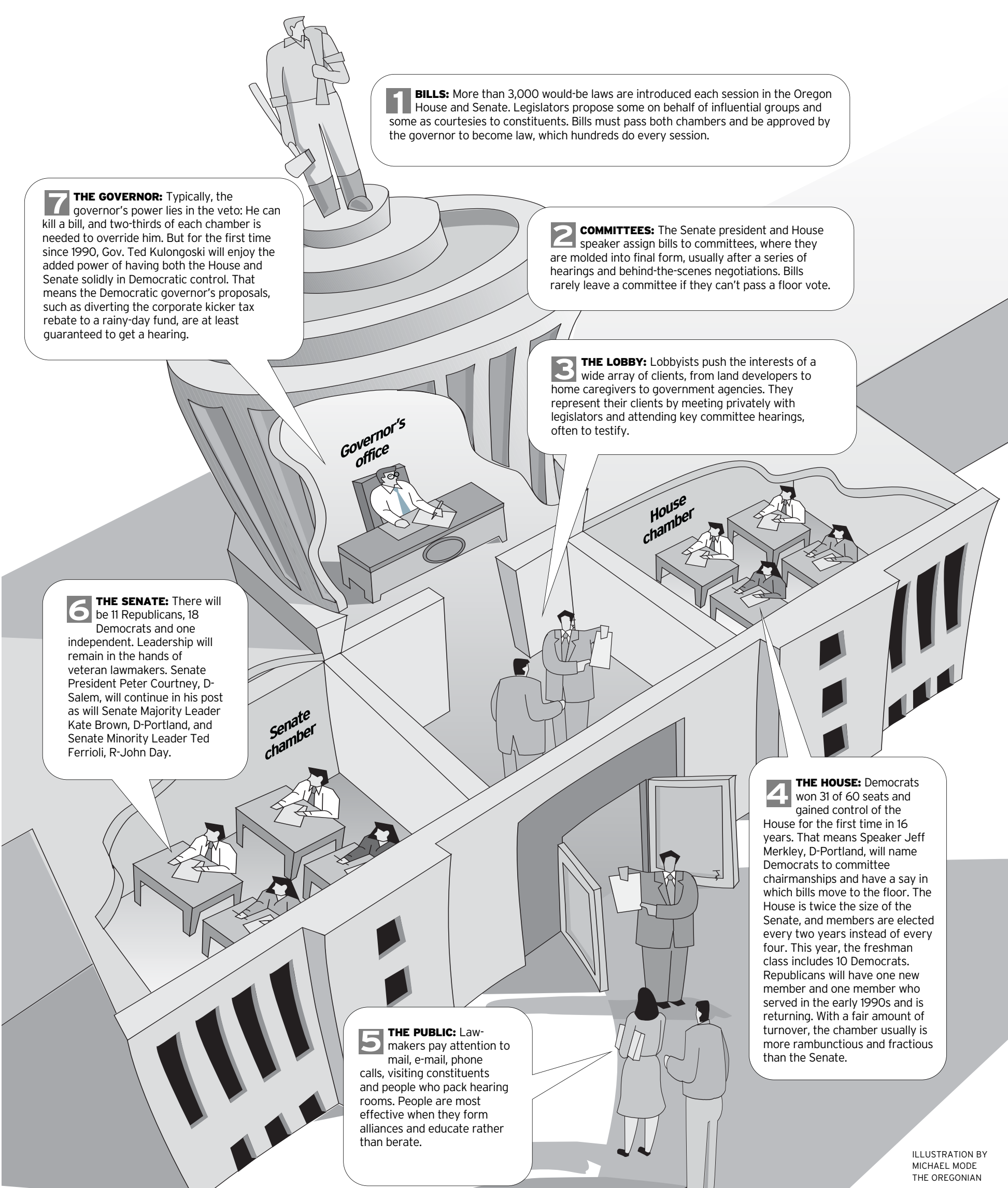


# NEWS FOCUS

EXAMINING WORLD, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

## How the Legislature works

Oregon's lawmaking process offers numerous opportunities for voters to get involved



**1 BILLS:** More than 3,000 would-be laws are introduced each session in the Oregon House and Senate. Legislators propose some on behalf of influential groups and some as courtesies to constituents. Bills must pass both chambers and be approved by the governor to become law, which hundreds do every session.

**7 THE GOVERNOR:** Typically, the governor's power lies in the veto: He can kill a bill, and two-thirds of each chamber is needed to override him. But for the first time since 1990, Gov. Ted Kulongoski will enjoy the added power of having both the House and Senate solidly in Democratic control. That means the Democratic governor's proposals, such as diverting the corporate kicker tax rebate to a rainy-day fund, are at least guaranteed to get a hearing.

**2 COMMITTEES:** The Senate president and House speaker assign bills to committees, where they are molded into final form, usually after a series of hearings and behind-the-scenes negotiations. Bills rarely leave a committee if they can't pass a floor vote.

**3 THE LOBBY:** Lobbyists push the interests of a wide array of clients, from land developers to home caregivers to government agencies. They represent their clients by meeting privately with legislators and attending key committee hearings, often to testify.

**6 THE SENATE:** There will be 11 Republicans, 18 Democrats and one independent. Leadership will remain in the hands of veteran lawmakers. Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, will continue in his post as will Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown, D-Portland, and Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day.

**4 THE HOUSE:** Democrats won 31 of 60 seats and gained control of the House for the first time in 16 years. That means Speaker Jeff Merkley, D-Portland, will name Democrats to committee chairmanships and have a say in which bills move to the floor. The House is twice the size of the Senate, and members are elected every two years instead of every four. This year, the freshman class includes 10 Democrats. Republicans will have one new member and one member who served in the early 1990s and is returning. With a fair amount of turnover, the chamber usually is more rambunctious and fractious than the Senate.

**5 THE PUBLIC:** Lawmakers pay attention to mail, e-mail, phone calls, visiting constituents and people who pack hearing rooms. People are most effective when they form alliances and educate rather than berate.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MODE THE OREGONIAN

### Key players

The Oregon Legislature, which meets every two years, will convene Monday for its 74th regular session. A look at leaders in Salem:

#### Governor

**Ted Kulongoski:** The 66-year-old former Oregon Supreme Court judge begins his second term hoping to build on the momentum of his re-election and his fellow Democrats' control of the state House and Senate. Kulongoski has offered a two-year budget that boosts spending 20 percent.



#### Senate

**President Peter Courtney:** The Salem Democrat says Democratic control of both the Senate and House comes with great responsibility. He wants to restore the Legislature's effectiveness and credibility. That's why Courtney, 63, supports an experiment with annual sessions that calls for the 2007 session to end by June 30 and for lawmakers to return for a short special session next year.



#### Majority Leader

**Kate Brown:** In 2004, Brown, a Portland attorney, led the Democratic takeover of the Oregon Senate, ending nearly a decade of Republican rule. The 2005 session had its challenges. Some complained that the party caucus was fractured. But Brown, 46, solidified on, working to ensure a majority in 2007.



#### Minority Leader

**Ted Ferrioli:** Although raised in Portland, the John Day timber industry executive has become a strong voice for Central and Eastern Oregon. On being stuck in the minority, Ferrioli, 54, recently said: "We're along for the ride here, aren't we?"



#### House

#### Speaker

**Jeff Merkley:** After complaining that House Republicans blocked Democrats' proposals for years, the pressure is on the Democrats to deliver. They've promised to fund education, improve health care access and promote renewable energy. Portlander Merkley, 50, has pledged to play fair with Republicans.



#### Majority Leader

**Dave Hunt:** The Clackamas County Democrat frequently votes with Republicans on issues such as cutting capital gains taxes. Still, Democrats chose Hunt, 39, to be their caucus leader after he appealed for support from legislators serving suburban and rural districts.



#### Minority Leader

**Wayne Scott:** Known as a businessman used to getting his way, Scott didn't get what he wanted out of the past election. Republicans lost four seats and control of the House. Scott, 59, will lead House Republicans during the 2007 session and lay the groundwork to try to regain the House.



- Michelle Cole

### By the numbers

**Senate:** 18 Democrats, 11 Republicans, one independent  
**House:** 31 Democrats, 29 Republicans  
**Newcomers:** 11 in the House (with one additional member returning after serving in the 1990s), three in the Senate  
**Length of session:** Six to eight months. The longest was 227 days in 2003; 2005 had the second-longest at 208 days.  
**Legislators' salary:** \$1,534 a month plus \$99 per diem. The Senate president and House speaker get twice as much. Members also get \$30,409 for staff and supplies each session.  
**Number of lobbyists:** As of Thursday, there were 322 paid, registered lobbyists. That number is expected to grow.

### Keeping tabs

**Check out news online:** The Oregonian's new Web page for the 2007 Legislature launches Monday at [www.oregonlive.com/legislature](http://www.oregonlive.com/legislature) with stories, blogs, updates.  
**Watch:** Televised gavel-to-gavel proceedings. See [www.theoregonchannel.com](http://www.theoregonchannel.com) for stations and listings.

### Contacts

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