



The Honorable Gregory V. Smith
Oregon House of Representatives
District 57

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 20, 2026

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH HOSTS PROUD RIVER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY AT THE OREGON STATE CAPITOL

SALEM, OR. – Representative Greg Smith (R-Heppner) welcomed participants from the [Proud River Leadership Academy](#) to the Oregon State Capitol this week for an in-depth look at the legislative process and citizen advocacy in action.

The visit provided Academy participants with the opportunity to engage directly with lawmakers, lobbyists, and legislative staff to better understand how public policy is shaped in Oregon. Throughout the day, attendees met with Governor Tina Kotek, Representative Smith, Senator Todd Nash, Senator Mike McLane, Senator Christine Drazan, and numerous members of the Capitol community.

Representative Smith emphasized the importance of civic engagement and leadership development in strengthening Oregon's future.

“The Proud River Leadership Academy is cultivating the next generation of engaged citizens and community leaders,” said Representative Smith. “Understanding how laws are made and how to effectively advocate for your community is essential in a representative democracy. It was an honor to host these bright and motivated individuals and provide them with firsthand exposure to the legislative process.”

Participants were given a comprehensive overview of how a bill moves through committee, the role of stakeholder input, and the importance of building relationships across sectors. In addition to formal meetings, Representative Smith hosted a reception at his personal residence, allowing Proud River members to connect informally with legislators, staff, and policy professionals.

Josh Burns, Proud River Program Coordinator, expressed appreciation for the opportunity. “Representative Smith created an unparalleled experience for our participants,” said Burns. “From meetings with state leaders to the opportunity to ask candid questions about policy and public service, our cohort gained invaluable insight into how government truly functions. Experiences like this empower our members to become thoughtful and effective advocates.”

Angel Aguilar, a participant in the Academy, said the visit deepened his understanding of civic leadership. “This experience made the legislative process feel accessible and achievable,” said Aguilar. “Meeting leaders from across the political spectrum and learning directly from them showed me that effective advocacy begins with relationships, preparation, and a willingness to engage respectfully. I’m leaving inspired and better equipped to serve my community.”

Representative Smith noted that fostering leadership and civic literacy remains a priority. “When citizens understand the process and feel confident engaging with it, our state benefits,” Smith added. “I look forward to continuing to support programs like Proud River that invest in Oregon’s future leaders.”

Representative Smith is the Republican budget leader who represents the entirety of Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler counties, as well as portions of Clackamas, Jefferson, Marion, Umatilla, and Wasco Counties.

###

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Representative Greg Smith
(541) 993-5236
rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov
