

How Atiyeh has done his job

This is an assessment of the performance of the Atiyeh administration in selected areas, including comments on that performance.

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	PERFORMANCE	COMMENTS
APPOINTMENTS	<p>Many of Atiyeh's key appointees had served under former Gov. Bob Straub. These included Public Utility Commissioner John Lobdell; Lynn Frank, director of the state Department of Energy; and Leo Hegstrom, director of the Department of Human Resources. Atiyeh also appointed five new Supreme Court justices: Jacob Tanzer, J.R. Campbell, Betty Roberts, Edwin J. Peterson and Wallace P. Carson.</p>	<p>The quality of Atiyeh's appointments has generally been regarded as a strength. Even critics often say that partisan politics has not played a major role in them. Supreme Court appointments have won almost unanimous approval. But Atiyeh met heavy criticism in 1979 for appointing W. Kelly Woods as director of the state Department of Energy, and former Oregon Chief Justice Kenneth J. O'Connell to the Energy Facility Siting Council. After bitter debate, the Senate rejected both — Woods because of ties to the nuclear power industry and O'Connell because he owned stock in private electric utilities.</p>
LAND-USE PLANNING	<p>Atiyeh has consistently supported state involvement in land-use planning, although he recently chided the Department of Land Conservation and Development for interpreting standards too strictly. His chief initiative in land-use planning was its proposal for creation of the Land Use Board of Appeals, done by the 1979 Legislature to speed the land-use appeals process and equalize interpretation of the state's planning goals.</p>	<p>Henry Richmond, executive director of 1000 Friends of Oregon, a group supporting land-use planning, praises establishment of the appeals board. He believes Atiyeh was less helpful on land-use legislation during the 1981 Legislature. He said Atiyeh made a strong and effective stand, however, against "lots of record" legislation that would have allowed building on thousands of lots around the state in farm and forestry zones.</p>
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	<p>Atiyeh's chief proposals for economic development occurred during the first 1982 special session. He proposed a \$2.3 million plan to enhance tourism, provide development loans to counties, hasten approval of state comprehensive plans and reorganize the state Department of Economic Development. Atiyeh also adopted a legislator's plan for a consortium between higher education and private business to develop high technology education. More recently, he formed an "Action Council" to bring state agency heads together to meet with and aid business representatives considering locating in Oregon.</p>	<p>Atiyeh's sharpest critics have said that his economic development ideas have been unsophisticated and have been too little too late. Atiyeh should have moved earlier to improve the Department of Economic Development, they say. They say Atiyeh did not recognize the depth of the recession early enough and claim he has not done enough to promote economic diversification in the state. Supporters say that Atiyeh's pro-business image enhances the Oregon business climate and add that there is little a governor can do in a recession to immediately attract new industry.</p>
TAXATION	<p>Before the first 1982 special legislative session, Atiyeh proposed major tax initiatives, many of which the Legislature resisted. His 1979 property tax relief plan would have limited tax rates to 1.5 percent of assessed valuation, and increases could have been no greater than 7 percent. The Legislature rejected this plan.</p> <p>The budget-balancing package that Atiyeh succeeded in getting through the 1980 special session included requiring quarterly payments of state income taxes not subject to withholding and quarterly payments of state insurance premium taxes, and imposing a 5 percent state severance tax. In the 1981 session, he proposed a \$233 million tax package — most of it unsuccessfully — that included raising cigarette taxes, increasing the corporate tax rate from 7.5 percent to 8 percent, increasing liquor taxes and also delaying "indexing" of income taxes.</p> <p>In the first 1982 special session, he proposed that employers' payment of withholding taxes be speeded up, and he also proposed increased beer and wine taxes. Most of his proposals, however, were for budget cuts. In the June 1982 special session, he proposed increasing the amount collected in withholding taxes.</p>	<p>Prior to 1982, Atiyeh backed tax increases to prevent large cuts in agency budgets. But he was sharply criticized in the first 1982 special session by House and Senate leaders who said he suddenly changed course. Atiyeh has also been criticized for his failure to have his property tax relief plan passed in 1979. This failure, it is said, paved the way for passage of the costly 30 percent tax relief package.</p>
ENERGY	<p>Atiyeh cites passage of the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act as a major achievement. Although the bill had been in Congress for about five years before Atiyeh took office, he and his staff actively worked for it. Atiyeh was also a chief advocate of the creation of the Northwest Power Planning Council, and he and his staff played a major role in bringing Northwest governors together in support of the council. The council gives the four Northwest states a role in planning the 20-year energy future of the region. Atiyeh also cites the package of energy conservation bills proposed to the 1981 legislative session, including bills requiring utilities to offer low-interest loans for weatherization and encouraging industry to save energy.</p>	<p>Atiyeh's leadership in creation of the power council is usually acknowledged. He has been criticized for not publicly calling attention to problems associated with financing and construction of Washington Public Power Supply System plants and also for waiting too long to criticize the Bonneville Power Administration as moving slowly to develop alternative energy resources.</p>
FORESTRY/WILDERNESS	<p>Atiyeh's most important initiative in forestry-related issues was a bill passed in 1982 to allow timber companies to renegotiate contracts to buy state-owned timber if the timber was harvested within a year. The bill also allowed a one-year extension of contracts. As a result, logging increased dramatically in late summer, created jobs and may have saved some companies from bankruptcy.</p> <p>Atiyeh has not supported creation of new wilderness areas.</p>	<p>Atiyeh's timber renegotiation bill has won high praise. He has been criticized by some environmentalists for not pushing for more wilderness lands.</p>

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