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SENATE PRESIDENT PETER COURTNEY'S STATEMENTS ON THE 2017 SESSION

Close of session

“The first session of the 79th Legislature has ended. It has not been easy. Things have been said and done that will leave wounds. That is sad. There are the times when working together is not favored. Beating the other guys is all that matters it seems.

“In the last few days we put that aside and came together. We did some good things for Oregon. I am proud and honored to be part of the Oregon Legislature. I always will be.”

Overview

“We began the session with the most aggressive agenda in my legislative career. We made a run at more big issues than ever before. We had some satisfying wins. We structurally changed key ways in which we budget. We enacted a budget-saving provider tax. We passed the largest transportation plan in state history. We also had losses. We did not reach an agreement on PERS reform. We did not reform our revenue system. At best, our successes are tempered by disappointment.”

Bipartisan cooperation

“In the Senate, we had some remarkable successes. Democrats and Republicans worked together on almost every issue. We talked to each other. We listened to each other. We sought consensus. On three key policy bills, we brought employees and employers together on what were once divisive issues. Our new pay equity law means women and minorities have a fair shot at being paid the same as their co-workers. Overtime rules have been clearly spelled out. Our statewide predictive scheduling law is the first the nation. None of these advancements would have been possible without unprecedented bipartisan cooperation.”

Budget

“We passed a budget. It’s balanced. That’s the one absolute job we must complete. It doesn’t happen automatically. Washington and Alaska had to go into special sessions to balance their budgets. Wisconsin, Connecticut and New Jersey still don’t have budgets. Our budget is the best we could do without real revenue reform. It funds schools better than expected. It limits tuition increases. It protects the Oregon Health Plan.”

Transportation

“The joint committee traveled thousands of miles, crisscrossing the state. They held more than a dozen public hearings. Heard testimony from hundreds of Oregonians. They worked tirelessly for more than a year. The result is the largest transportation package in Oregon’s history. It provides maintenance, seismic upgrades and congestion relief. It includes transit, bike paths and safe routes to schools. It wasn’t easy. It required dedication, determination and compromise. The stakeholders stepped up and became equal partners with the leaders of the committee. Oregon will reap the benefits for decades to come.”

Provider Tax

“The provider tax is the oxygen that breathed life into the rest of the budget. Without it, the consequences would have been catastrophic. I am extremely proud of the Senate for showing incredible bi-partisan leadership on one of the most critical issues of the session.”

Revenue Reform

“Astounding work was done. Compromises were made. We had a plan which would add jobs, grow the economy and raise significant revenue. Some business groups opposed it. The Senate was willing to consider a different approach. We couldn’t make it happen.

“I don’t want the effort to be wasted. Oregon needs structural revenue reform. We’re going to keep working. The sweet spot is out there and I know Senator Mark Hass won’t give up until he’s found it.”

Mental Health

“We avoided devastating cuts. We kept the Junction City hospital and all the wards at the State Hospital in Salem open. We made some modest investments in community treatment – not nearly as much as we need. We took steps to enforce mental health parity. We still have a so much work to do. Mental health must become and remain a front burner issue.”

Public safety

“We did more than just maintain public safety. We added 20 new state troopers – many of them are in areas of the state with limited local law enforcement coverage and growing challenges from drug cartels. We increased protections for victims of child sex trafficking and the worst repeat sex offenders will now face life in prison. Oregon may be among the first states to take that action.”