



## OFFICE OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT

900 Court St., N.E., Room S-201

Salem OR 97301

[www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us)

## NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Robin Maxey

(503) 986-1605

[robin.maxey@state.or.us](mailto:robin.maxey@state.or.us)

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### **BUSINESS OREGON AWARDS SEISMIC UPGRADE GRANTS; COURTNEY CALLS AGAIN FOR \$200 MILLION INVESTMENT**

(SALEM) -- Senate President Peter Courtney called again today for aggressively funding critical safety upgrades at Oregon schools considered at risk of collapsing in a major earthquake. As he did in an August 19 press conference in Salem, Courtney said he will ask the Legislature to approve \$200 million in bond funding for the 2015-17 biennium to pay for the upgrades.

“We are overdue for the big quake. Our children are in danger. We need to make our schools safer. We need to do it now,” said Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn). “We saw what happened in China in 2008 when an earthquake struck during the school day. Thousands of children died. Oregon is better than that. We can fix our schools. We must fix our schools.”

Seismologists say a massive earthquake has taken place in the Cascadia Subduction Zone off the Oregon Coast on the average of every 300 years for the past 10,000 years. The last such quake hit in 1700.

The Senate President’s remarks followed the announcement Monday by Business Oregon that it is awarding nearly \$15 million in grants for projects at 12 Oregon schools and one community college. The grants will be distributed statewide from the South Coast, to Eastern Oregon to Willamette Valley. The program was moved to Business Oregon in 2013 and the agency has focused in its first year on raising awareness about the available funding.

The winning grants were selected from 36 project applications, totaling nearly \$41 million in needs. Courtney said the need statewide is far greater. A statewide survey shows that more than 1,000 schools are at high or very high risk of collapse in the event of a major earthquake.

Courtney led the Oregon Legislature (SB1 in 2007) to create the grant program to distribute funds to school districts. Unfortunately, budget constraints during the great recession then limited the amount of money available for the grants. So far, 25 schools have been upgraded at a cost of \$18.7 million. The latest grants will almost double that amount, but Courtney said Monday the state still must do more.

“Oregonians are beginning to understand the need to have our schools upgraded. They’re sharing their concerns with their legislators and their legislators are listening. The need is real and I have a sense that Oregon is ready to get serious about this critical issue,” Courtney said.

*The business Oregon announcement can be found at <http://www.oregon4biz.com/News-&-Media/index.php?a=144>.*