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NEWS RELEASE

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SENATE PRESIDENT COMMENTS ON 2018 SESSION

Statements by Senate President Peter Courtney

Overview

“This session surprised me. I was worried that we were over-committed, doing too much. But we just adjourned eight days before the constitutional deadline. We passed significant legislation, most with bipartisan support.

“I don’t think there are many legislatures in the nation who can accomplish so much in 28 days. That is remarkable in a time when Congress and many legislative bodies are fighting and breaking down.

“I am very pleased I got to serve in the 2018 Legislative Session.”

Cleaner Air Oregon

“The Senate came together to protect Oregon’s health by passing the Cleaner Air Bill, unanimously 29-0. This bill will reduce toxic air pollution and make Oregon’s air safer for us all. Urban or rural, Democrat or Republican, we all breath the same air.”

Prescription Drug Prices

“Prescription drug prices are skyrocketing. Drugs that have been around for decades are suddenly doubling or tripling in price. It is time that Oregonians know why. That’s why we passed the prescription pricing transparency bill. Now, if a drug manufacturer wants to increase a drug’s price more than 10 percent they will have to submit a report explaining why. This will increase transparency and accountability for prescription drug prices.”

Domestic Violence

“More than 55 percent of female homicides were related to domestic violence last year. This session we took two major steps in addressing this issue. We passed Senate Bill 1562, which expands the definition of strangulation and elevates it to a felony. We also passed House Bill 4145 closing the ‘boyfriend loophole’, which will keep guns away from domestic abusers and stalkers. Domestic violence is a serious issue. It affects too many Oregonians. These bills will protect victims and help keep families safe.”

Net Neutrality

“This issue is very important to Oregonians, and I have heard from people across the state. House Bill 4155 helps to protect a free and open internet. It prohibits public bodies from contracting with broadband Internet access service providers that engage in paid prioritization, blocks lawful content or applications, or disadvantages lawful Internet content.”

Mental Health

“Mental Health continues to be one of my top priorities. People are hurting, they need help and often have nowhere to turn. Mental health is at the heart of many of the major political issues of today. This session we expanded the Oregon Psychiatric Access Line so doctors can call in with questions when a patient is having psychiatric crisis. We increased mental health residential rates to provide access to mental health services for more Oregonians. And we invested \$950,000 to place mental health therapists in schools so that students have help when they are hurting. Mental health and physical health are closely tied. It is important that Oregonians have access to quality mental health services.”

Budget

“The Legislature passed a balanced budget. It increases funding and support for foster parents, funds 25 additional State Trooper positions, dedicates funds to expand rural broadband access, and provides for more mental health services across Oregon, including in our schools. A balanced budget is our number one job here. We were able to create a budget that helps Oregonians across the state and saves for a future rainy day. All within 28 days. That is remarkable.”

Preparing for 2019

“The Speaker and I created two new committees that will continue to work throughout the interim. The Joint Committee on Student Success is working to ensure every student in Oregon, regardless of where they go to school, will have the opportunity to achieve success. The Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction will study ways Oregon can control and reduce its carbon emissions. I expect to see actionable proposals from both committees that the Legislature can take up in 2019.”

Salem Area Improvements

- \$200,000 for a Salem Youth Shelter led by McKay High School student body president Raul Marquez. Every child should have a safe and warm place to sleep. This shelter will provide that, along with a central location for homeless teens to get the resources they need.
- \$150,000 for a Marion County Sobering Center. This will be a safe place where inebriated people can go to receive the services they need. This keeps them off the streets, out of jail, and out of hospital emergency rooms.
- \$1.5 million to the Salem Housing Authority for the Yaquina Hall-Southfair project. This project will rehab two buildings in Salem for a combined 93 units of affordable housing. twenty units will be for those suffering from serious mental illness.
- \$350,000 for the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency for homelessness prevention programs and homelessness services. Services including rental assistance, rapid rehousing, street outreach, day shelters, and emergency shelters for youth, families with children, and individuals fleeing domestic violence.
- \$250,000 for the Salem Keizer Education Foundation's Mike McLaran Student Skills Center project. Rehabs the Starkey-McCully building on Commercial Street into a Student Skills Center that will provide students with workforce training, college preparation, mentoring, and academic and social support.
- SB 1501 makes changes to the Salem Keizer Transit Board that will make sure they can continue to grow and provide reliable, safe, and timely services to the Salem Keizer community.