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**STOP THE SABOTAGE: Democrats Join Oregonians
on Capitol Steps to Defend Democracy, Call for End
to GOP Obstruction**

***Over 300,000 Oregonians could lose health care if Senate Republicans
refuse to return.***

SALEM, Ore. - Today, Oregon Democratic legislators joined Oregonians on the Capitol steps to call on Senate Republicans to stop the sabotage and get back to work. Oregonians sent lawmakers a clear mandate to tackle issues like homelessness, public safety, education, and abortion rights—all at risk if Republicans do not come back.

“This is part of a national pattern where Republicans have chosen to ignore democracy instead of winning over voters,” **said Representative Khanh Pham** (D-Outer SE Portland). “Our rights, freedoms and liberties are not up for negotiation.”

In the last five years, Oregon Republicans have walked out five times, demanding Democrats, elected by a majority, disregard Oregonians’ top priorities time and time again.

“Democracy struggles to survive when politicians repeatedly game the system—when they manipulate technical rules to stop democracy from happening,” **said Sandy Chung, Executive Director of ACLU Oregon**. “This is what the Senate Republicans are doing right now. Not only are they refusing to participate in democracy, they are obstructing it.”

Currently the longest walkout in Oregon history, Senate Republicans are [holding the entire state hostage](#) to block the Reproductive Health & Access to Care Bill (HB 2002), a measure that aligns Oregon law with *Roe v Wade* in response to the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision. **In Oregon, [72% support abortion, including 61% of rural Oregonians.](#)**

“As an OB/GYN I join the hundreds of Oregon doctors who support HB 2002. We need this to clarify Oregon law so providers can deliver effective and safe care to their patients,” **said Dr. Paula Bednarek, M.D., M.P.H.**

In 2019, when Senate Republicans showed up with two days left of session, the Senate only got through 121 bills and legislators were not allowed to debate, ask questions, or offer statements of support or opposition, obscuring the democratic process and making it unaccountable to voters.

There are currently hundreds of bills stalled, making it impossible to pass critical legislation if Republicans come back with only one to a few days left of session, as they have indicated.

HEALTH CARE, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & PUBLIC SAFETY

With hundreds of bills stalled, over [300,000 Oregonians could risk losing their health care](#) with Bridge Plan funding at risk. [That's one in five people on the Oregon Health Plan.](#)

Also at risk are bills like HB 2395 that would increase access to life-saving naloxone kits across the state, and HB 2645, which gives law enforcement the tools they need to prosecute drug dealers selling fentanyl.

“What Republicans are doing is disrespecting our democracy and the people of Oregon who sent a clear mandate on the issues we need to get done,” **said Representative Travis Nelson** (D-N & NE Portland), a registered nurse. “I see the impacts of the behavioral health crisis first hand. This cannot wait.”

WILDFIRE RESPONSE

With wildfire season around the corner, several bills like SB 509, which funds community-based programs to reduce wildfire risk, hang in the balance. Leaving thousands of Oregon families, their homes and businesses vulnerable to damage.

"My community and my family have suffered the devastation of wildfires in Oregon. Many have not recovered from the 2020 fires that destroyed communities and burned down my mother's house," **said Rene Braga, who lives in the Rogue Valley.** "More fires will come, and legislation to prevent, fight, recover from, and make us more resilient to wildfire is being held up by the Senators who won't show up to do their jobs. We can't wait any longer."

“People I talk to across the state are really tired of the games holding back the resources they need to keep their homes and communities from burning down as wildfire gets more frequent and intense,” **said Senator Jeff Golden** (D-Rogue Valley). “They can’t believe that Legislators would abandon them in this critical time to score points with their political base.”

BILLIONS IN FEDERAL DOLLARS

Oregon could also lose out on billions in federal dollars from the Biden-Harris administration’s American Rescue Plan and Inflation Reduction Act, which could be used to fund major infrastructure projects across the state, including in rural Oregon.

“Structures like Big Creek Dams in Newport need federal funding to support the industries we rely on,” **said Representative David Gomberg** (D-Lincoln & Western Benton/Lane Counties), a rural and coastal legislator. “We cannot leave rural Oregon behind.”

“Newport’s Big Creek Dams are the city’s only water source. Without a source of clean water, our fishing industry collapses,” **said Jan Kaplan, President of the Newport City Council.** “The research hub around Hatfield working on climate and ocean chemistry closes. Our tourism and visitor industry fails. Our city fails.”

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

As the housing and homelessness crisis continue, tenants and landlords have [come together](#) to call on the Legislature to provide funding for homelessness prevention, rehousing, and rental assistance. These supports are crucial to responding to the state’s homelessness crisis since rehousing unhoused Oregonians is costlier than preventing homelessness in the first place.

“It has been shocking to me how willing Republican senators are to inflict harm upon their districts by walking off the job and letting critical legislation and homelessness prevention funding that our communities need die,” **said Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi, a community organizer and policy coordinator for Unite Oregon.** “Central Oregon has one of the highest rates of family homelessness in the nation. As these parents scramble to do whatever they can to protect their children, Senator Knopp has turned his back on them.”

“This year we made tremendous progress when we passed the bipartisan Affordable Housing and Emergency Homelessness Response,” **said Senator Kayse Jama** (D-Portland, Damascus, Boring). “It is because of this great experience that I am so heartbroken to see my colleagues on the other side of the aisle dismiss that victory and derail further progress on housing and homelessness. I implore my Republican friends to come back to work so that we can tackle Oregon’s housing crisis.”

EDUCATION

Further endangered are record K-12 school funding, educator workforce investments, and an early literacy package, all critical to student success and outcomes. School districts must finalize budgets by the end of June, putting educator jobs at risk.

“I am passionate about ensuring every student receives a quality education and the support they need to thrive,” **said Danny Cage, the youngest school board member to be elected.** “We don’t have time to mess around - these critical investments are at stake. It’s time for Senate Republicans to get back to work and show up for the students of Oregon.”

“I’m a new legislator for my district. They sent me here to represent their voices, to represent the voices of educators, of laborers like my parents, of women of color, of the Vietnamese community. They are counting on me to show up and do my job,” **said Representative Hoa Nguyen** (D-E Portland & Damascus). “Right now Senate Republicans are playing with people’s lives, including school staff who could lose their jobs if we don’t pass a budget soon.”

“Oregon’s schools, educators, and students need us to take action this legislative session,” **said Representative Courtney Neron** (D-Wilsonville), an educator. “From early childhood through higher education, our schools and students face serious challenges. It’s time Senate Republicans show up for Oregon and for their districts.”

“Our kids’ future depends on their having teachers and other school staff who are given the tools to succeed,” **said Senator Michael Dembrow** (D-Portland). “They need our help, and it cannot wait. It’s time for our Senate Republican colleagues to return, do their jobs, and join us in finishing this crucial work.”

REPRODUCTIVE & LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

SJR 33 will give the voters of Oregon the opportunity to preserve equal rights protections in Oregon's constitution during the 2024 General Election. If passed, this amendment would protect Oregonians' freedom and rights to make their own decisions about their own bodies and families, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – including the right to access health care including contraception, abortion, and gender-affirming care.

“As a nonbinary trans person, I know I deserve access to medical care my doctor prescribes as necessary to my well-being. I also know that without access to abortion and other reproductive health services, none of us are in charge of our own lives,” **said Blair Stenvick of Basic Rights Oregon**. “These are the urgent issues at stake with SJR 33. And they're the issues being held up by Senators who refuse to do the job they were elected to do.”

“In the face of this threat and anti-LGBTQ, anti-abortion attacks around the country, this is our moment to stand up and say, ‘not in Oregon’,” **said Representative Ben Bowman** (D-Tigard, Metzger & S Beaverton). “Oregonians deserve to weigh in on these important issues, and a handful of Republican Senators should not be standing in the way.”

Over the last five weeks, Democrat and Republican leadership has met to find a way to end the walkout, but Senate Republicans have not been interested in negotiations. Instead, Senate Republicans continue to obstruct, threatening the state's democratic institutions and the will of Oregon voters.

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