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STATE SENATOR
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OREGON STATE SENATE

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As a candidate last year I went through the usual round of interviews with public employee unions. They all asked me if I would promise to oppose any and every attempt to reduce their PERS benefits. I told them no, I won't promise that. The unfunded PERS liability is a ball-and-chain that's pulling down many local governments and school districts and keeps them from moving forward and meeting critical needs. I said to Public Employees that this is an all-hands-on-deck time, and you're some of the hands we need. What I did promise was that any bill I vote for will have to be **BALANCED** to reflect the fact that the PERS obligation is on the shoulders of **ALL** Oregonians, not just current public employees.

Mr. President, this bill misses that mark. While there **ARE** elements that would have diffuse impacts on Oregonians generally, it applies a direct, targeted hit on just **one narrow segment of Oregonians**—the same narrow segment tapped when Tier 2 was created, and tapped again when OPSRP was created—public employees who are working and serving us today.

Every one of us is frustrated by the PERS dilemma...by how expensive it is, by how long it's lasting, by how difficult it is to get our hands around. It seems to me that frustration's now spilling out as an urge to take a swing at Tier I retirees who, as we all know, are beyond our reach.... so our punch misses and instead smacks in the face **CURRENT** public employees who didn't create this mess, aren't receiving those old generous benefits, and whose full compensation are in many cases less than they can earn elsewhere. Some agencies and school districts are currently seeing that in the difficulty they're having recruiting qualified people.

Mr. President, this bill is not fair to public service workers and it's not worthy of us. Beyond that, **I** don't think it's bold enough to match the urgency of this problem.

We can do this differently. We don't have to accept the premise that we have only 2 options: do nothing—**WHICH IS NOT AN OPTION**—or pass this unbalanced bill. We can take a breath and realize that despite the pressure of the last 24 or 48 hours, we don't have to push a bill out of this chamber today. We can take a short period of time to balance it with other revenue options that would acknowledge that this debt **BELONGS TO ALL OF US** and could even take it on more aggressively than this bill does, so that Oregon cities,

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counties and school districts can more quickly get back to concentrating fully the jobs we need them to do.

WHICH revenue options are those? The big question, right? The good news is that over the last year dozens have been analyzed for strengths and weaknesses, more than enough ingredients to put together a sound shared-responsibility package. I have my favorites that I'd be happy to advocate, and I'm guessing many of you do as well. None of my choices are politically easy or pain-free. But we already know that about PERS reform. But that's not a license to shove a major share of what is ALL of our burden onto the shoulders of very small percentage of Oregonians who didn't create this mess and are NOT unduly benefitting from it.

I ask you to join me in insisting that we do a more balanced, fairer, more effective job addressing the PERS crisis than does SB 1049.