



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Productive Short Session Comes to a Close**

*2016 session helped working families, responded to emergencies*

Today, the final gavel fell on a successful, productive Legislative Session that responded to emerging crises and will deliver real improvements in the lives of working families.

The hallmark of the 2016 session was the historic bill to raise the minimum wage for tens of thousands of Oregon workers. The uniquely Oregon approach will put more money into the pockets of hard-working Oregonians this year while phasing in the full raise gradually over the next six years. It also creates a regional approach that recognizes different costs of living across the state.

“For thousands of working families, raising the minimum wage starting this year will mean more money for things like rent, food, and school supplies,” says House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson. “And in the longer term, this approach will play a big role in rebuilding a middle-class economy that works for everyone.”

Along with raising the wage, the legislature voted to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit for working families with children under the age of three, as well as passing a series of bills that will protect low-income renters and expand affordable housing units statewide. These policies build on important victories from the 2015 session, like Paid Sick Leave and the Oregon Retirement Program, to protect those who’ve been left behind by the economic recovery.

The 2016 session also saw landmark work to reduce Oregon’s dependence on fossil fuels. Senate Bill 1547, the Coal Transition and Clean Energy bill, will move Oregon off of coal by 2030 and double the use of renewable energy.

“Keeping Oregon a great place to live for our kids and grandkids will require a continued commitment to protecting our clean air and water, building an economy that works for everyone, and leveling the playing field for small businesses,” Rep. Williamson adds. “In this short session, House Democrats delivered on the priorities that matter to all Oregonians.”

Through the budget rebalance, legislators were able to respond quickly to emerging issues that couldn’t have been anticipated a year ago. In particular, the legislature voted to fund \$6.1 million in emergency assistance for the Umpqua Community College campus to help them rebuild following the tragic shooting last year. Another \$2 million was set aside to help Harney County recover from the 41-day occupation earlier this year. And \$2.5 million will go to the Department of Environmental Quality to improve oversight of industrial emissions.

“Annual sessions were designed to respond to urgent needs in our community that can’t wait,” says Rep. Williamson. “Over the past five weeks, we’ve begun to address the economic crisis facing many families in our state, and we acted swiftly to resolve unexpected budget needs. The work we’ve done in this session will improve the lives of Oregonians for years to come.”

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