

Issue Summaries

2014

In the 2014 legislative session, House Democrats delivered on Oregon's priorities by prioritizing access to high-quality education, creating jobs and encouraging innovation, and making government work better for Oregonians. This document contains bill summaries and budget highlights in key issue areas.



Prioritizing Access to High-Quality Education

K-12 Education

Summer Learning Grants for high-poverty schools (HB 4117): Creates a targeted grant program to improve student achievement at some of the highest need schools in Oregon. HB 4117 funds summer learning programs that will add valuable learning time for over 5,000 of Oregon's most vulnerable students.

Increasing access to summer meals for kids in need (HB 4090): More than 50% of children in Oregon qualify for free- and reduced-cost meals, but for many of those kids, nutritional support drops off during summer vacation. HB 4090 allows schools to use grant money to better meet the goals of summer meal programs.

Empowering teachers to help build a stronger future for Oregon schools (HB 4127*): Requires that majority of members of Oregon Education Investment Board be public educational professionals who work, or have worked, on regular basis in public educational settings.

**Passed the House, not the Senate*

Higher Education

"Aspiration to College" (HB 4116): Establishes a competitive grant program for community colleges throughout the state to provide scholarships and college success services to low-income and first-generation college students throughout Oregon, similar to Portland Community College's successful Future Connect program.

Protecting students from unfair fees on student loans (HB 4102*): Prohibits public or private post-secondary institutions of education from entering into contracts with student financial aid management firms unless contracts meet certain requirements.

**Passed the House, not the Senate*

Transparency in higher education outcomes (HB 4019): Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to provide information about affordability and value of institutions of higher education in Oregon so that students and their families can make informed choices when choosing where to go to college.

Exploring the "Oregon Promise" (SB 1524): Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission to examine viability of program allowing students who graduated from high school in state or who completed grade 12 to attend community college for two years without paying tuition and fees.

Including apprenticeships in 40-40-20 educational goals (HB 4058): The "40-40-20" goal is for 40 percent of Oregonians to attain a four-year degree, 40 percent to earn an Associate's degree or other post-secondary certificate, and all Oregonians to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. House Bill 4058 supports "the middle 40" by incorporating apprenticeships into Oregon's educational goals.

Tuition Equity for veterans in graduate school (HB 4021): Allows U.S. veterans to attend graduate school at public universities at the Oregon resident rate for tuition and fees, beginning fall 2014, if the veteran has been in Oregon for 12 months prior to enrollment.

Budget Highlights:

- + Protected historic \$6.85 billion investment in K-12 education
- + Provided \$750,000 to “Aspiration to College” grant program to help more students attend community college
- + Allocated \$500,000 to Summer Learning Grants program to help low-performing schools in high-poverty areas
- + Added \$2 million investment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs
- + Provided \$2.3 million more in Oregon Opportunity Grants to help students pay for college
- + Added \$2.2 million in funding for Employment Related Day Care to serve more families (8500 total), reduce the program’s long wait list, and support working parents who also are enrolled in post-secondary higher education programs
- + Protected funding for early learning programs like Oregon Pre-K

Creating Jobs and Encouraging Innovation

Expanding access to capital for small businesses looking to grow and create jobs (SB 1563): Raises the cap on a business development fund - the “Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund” (EDLF) - that the state offers to small businesses looking to hire and expand. Loans from the EDLF help start-ups, micro-enterprises and small businesses expand or become established. Since 2009, Business Oregon, the agency that manages the fund, has provided more than \$1.6 million in loans to more than 50 small businesses in sectors ranging from natural resources to high tech. SB 1563 raises the amount of support that a small business can receive through EDLF to a total of \$100,000, up from the current cap of \$70,000.

Retraining Oregonians and supporting the needs of Oregon employers (SB 1527): Establishes a retraining pilot program tailored to unemployed and underemployed engineers to address the skills gap in Oregon’s developing bioscience industries.

Promoting community-based strategies to spur local economic development (HB 4015): Establishes the **Regional Solutions Program** in statute, which helps state agencies that operate grant and loan programs to take into consideration factors that will help them prioritize funding of projects that affect regional economic development.

Modernizing Oregon’s job training programs (SB 1566): Increases coordination of state and local services involving education, employment, and economic development to improve outcomes for Oregonians seeking work and businesses seeking employees. The bill also assigns new duties to the Oregon Workforce Investment Board and directs it to work with local workforce investment boards to increase efficiencies and align services with local labor market needs.

West Coast Infrastructure Exchange (HB 4111): Starts the process of connecting local infrastructure projects to financing by establishing the Public Infrastructure Commission to identify Oregon’s public infrastructure funding needs and to research and analyze financing and procurement methods for public infrastructure projects.

Encouraging technology companies to locate in Oregon communities (HB 4005): Increases the number of “electronic commerce zones” the state can approve from 10 to 15. The “e-commerce” designation provides additional tax incentives to encourage technology companies to locate in traditional enterprise zones.

Providing greater certainty for future land-use planning (HB 4078): Establishes new urban and rural reserves and expands the urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in Washington County, as well as directs the regional planning agency Metro to review the UGB every 6 years. The bill aims to clear away uncertainty triggered in part by a Feb. 20 court decision to throw out a 50-year growth plan adopted in 2010 by Metro and Portland-area counties.

Allowing small businesses to self-insure the health benefits they provide employees (HB 4050): Allows small businesses that self-insure to purchase reinsurance, which protects them against expensive claims that could wipe out the company’s health insurance fund.

Cracking down on “patent trolls” (SB 1540): “Patent trolls” are companies that purchase patents then threaten small businesses and individuals with lawsuits for infringements on patent rights. SB 1540 would make patent trolling a violation of the Oregon trade law and allow those who have been targeted by a patent troll to sue for attorneys’ fees.

Budget Highlights:

- + Authorized \$198 million in bonding for OHSU Cancer Research Institute facilities
- + Added \$750,000 Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help small businesses grow and work more efficiently
- + \$250,000 to fund a new pilot program to retrain unemployed and underemployed bioscience engineers (SB 1527)
- + \$1 million for the West Coast Infrastructure Exchange
- + Invested \$400,000 to redevelop the Cannery Building at the Port of Port Orford (if you even want to list this one)
- + Redirected \$3 million to the Marine Navigation Improvement Fund for coastal port dredging to improve Oregon’s shipping channels
- + Added \$5 million in lottery bond proceeds for Clean Energy Works Oregon for energy upgrade projects
- + Funded \$9.3 million in Regional Solutions projects that drive community and economic development across the state
- + \$3 million to fund a Community Revitalization Revolving Loan Fund that would be available to Malheur, Harney, Grant, Baker, Union, Wallowa, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler counties for energy conservation, renewable energy, and general business development projects

Supporting Families and Vulnerable Oregonians

Collecting the money that wrong-doing corporations owe to Oregonians (HB 4143*): Oregon is currently one of only two states that allows unclaimed money from a class action lawsuit to go back to the company found at-fault. HB 4143 would send that unclaimed money to bolster legal aid services for low-income Oregonians, rather than returning it to the company that lost the lawsuit. Oregon's legal aid services provide civil representation for those Oregonians who are least likely to be able to fight for their own interests - seniors, children, victims of domestic violence, as well as those who live in poverty, lack access to technology, or may be living with a disability.

**Passed the House, not the Senate*

Supporting local farmers who help feed hungry Oregonians (SB 1541): A targeted expansion of the crop donation tax credit will make a big impact on the food supply at local food banks.

Preserving Affordable Housing in Manufactured Home Parks (HB 4038): Manufactured home parks across Oregon provide affordable housing for seniors, new families, and low income Oregonians. The current process by which the owner of a manufactured home park may sell the park to its tenants is complex and cumbersome. House Bill 4038 streamlines the process, providing better notice to tenants and greater flexibility for owners. This bill will allow tenants of manufactured home parks a greater opportunity to buy their park and preserve their investment in their home.

Providing relief to low-income, senior homeowners (HB 4148): Reduces charges on seniors and disabled individuals who qualify for the Senior and Disabled Property Tax Deferral Program by changing interest rate calculations from compounded to simple interest. The tax deferral program helps qualified people, who often live on fixed incomes, remain in their homes by deferring tax payments until the property is sold.

Increasing awareness of problem gambling treatment (HB 4028): Reinstates advertising of gambling treatment services, increasing awareness of the availability of treatment for both problem gamblers and their families.

Establishing a public guardianship program for adults who have nowhere to turn (SB 1553): Establishes a public guardianship program under the existing office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO). Lack of secure guardianship may result in repeat hospitalizations, commitment to psychiatric units, or even premature death. Without a trusted friend or family member to act as fiduciary those facing severe mental health conditions, developmental disabilities, and age related conditions who cannot afford to hire a fiduciary go without this crucial protection.

Alert System for Missing Vulnerable Adults (SB 1577): Requires law enforcement agencies to have response protocols in place for seniors who go missing, especially those with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Many law enforcement departments already have policies in place, but Senate Bill 1577 will ensure that departments across Oregon are prepared to respond to a missing adult quickly and safely.

Court Appointed Special Advocates for seniors (HB 4114): Allows courts to appoint special advocates for "protected persons," similar to the CASA program for children. Special advocates will be volunteer community members, judicially appointed to monitor existing court guardianships to ensure that protected persons are receiving adequate services from their guardians, that they are not being subjected abuse or neglect, and that the guardianship is still appropriate.

Building upon work to protect against elder abuse (HB 4151): Requires investigations of elder abuse to be completed within 120 days from the date of the reported abuse, except when concurrent criminal investigation is ongoing. This bill is a step to protect vulnerable seniors that was developed by diverse group of interests, including health care facilities, health care workers, advocates for elderly and vulnerable populations, and DHS.

Budget Highlights:

- + Added \$2 million more for emergency housing and homelessness assistance
- + Added \$2.5 million in bonding for affordable housing preservation
- + Allocated \$10 million to address housing issues in the community mental health system
- + Allocated \$13.3 million to senior programs including:
 - o \$4 million more for Senior and Disabled Transit services
 - o \$3.3 million for long term care provider training
 - o \$1.3 million for allowing more Oregonians to use the state's registry of home care workers
 - o \$1 million in funding to establish statewide Public Guardian and Conservator services
- + Directed \$12.7 million to a Special Purpose Appropriation so that it can be spent on other senior programs and emerging needs for seniors.
 - This \$26 million (\$13.3 million to senior programs; \$12.7 million to special purpose appropriation) is the remainder of the \$41 million approved during the 2013 special session to strengthen programs serving Oregon's seniors.

Protecting our Environment

Pollinator Protection Act (HB 4139): Requires Oregon State University, to develop educational materials regarding best practices for avoiding adverse effects of pesticides on populations of bees and other pollinating insects and creates a Task Force to study the issue of pollinator health

Supporting renewable marine energy (HB 4042): Clears the way for renewable marine energy to be used for net-metering, the practice of offsetting energy costs by generating power, storing it and feeding it to a supplier. Wave energy devices had not been included in past net-metering legislation.

Expanding energy improvement program (HB 4041): Expands energy improvement program by authorizing local governments to facilitate private financing of energy improvements by property owners.

Improving air quality (HB 4107): Aimed at reducing heavy truck emissions in areas with high levels of air pollution, HB 4107 will expand the Alternative Fuel Vehicle Revolving Fund so that businesses in areas with high air pollution levels can get financial assistance to purchase or convert engines to run on alternative fuels with lower emissions.

Preserving the Renewable Portfolio Standard (HB 4126): Under Oregon's Renewable Portfolio Standard, utilities are required to deliver a percentage of the electricity they provide from eligible renewable sources by 2025. HB 4126 provides flexibility for smaller rural electric cooperatives to grow without a significant cost to their customers, since some rural utilities have come close to the threshold for large utilities that requires costly energy portfolio changes.

Urging Safer Crude Oil Transport (HJM 201): In 2013, oil trains spilled more oil in the U.S. than in every year between 1975 and 2012 combined. As oil production in Canada and the north-central United States increases, more and more oil is being transported through Oregon by rail, threatening people, communities, and the environment. This memorial urges Congress to enhance safety standards for rail cars that transport crude oil and other flammable liquids.

Budget Highlights:

- + Added \$5 million in lottery bond proceeds for Clean Energy Works Oregon for energy efficiency upgrade projects
- + Approved \$375,000 for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conduct air quality monitoring in the Swan Island area of North Portland.

Respecting our Veterans

Tuition Equity for veterans in graduate school (HB 4021): Allows U.S. veterans to attend graduate school at public universities at the Oregon resident rate for tuition and fees, beginning fall 2014, if the veteran has been in Oregon for 12 months prior to enrollment.

Warm Springs Veterans Memorial Highway and Veterans hiring preference (HB 4023): Designates portion of U.S. Highway 26 within Warm Springs Reservation as Warm Springs Veterans Memorial Highway. In support of veterans, HB 4023 also states that private employers may prefer to hire and promote veterans and their spouses.

Military Children Education Compact (SB 1506): Senate Bill 1506 enables Oregon to join the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and establishes the State Council for Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The Council will provide a central point of contact for military families moving to Oregon to help transfer student records from the originating school district to the new school district. Previously, Oregon was one of six states not in the compact.

Exploring lottery raffle game to benefit veterans' education and economic development (HB 5201): Directs the Oregon State Lottery to explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated lottery raffle game for veteran's education and economic development.

Promoting Public Safety

Boosting support for emergency responders to help keep our communities safe (HB 4055):

Much of the funding for Oregon's 911 centers comes from a 75-cent monthly charge on landlines and standard cell phone lines, but prepaid cellphone users have not been paying into the system even though they benefit from access to the same emergency services. HB 4055 creates a phased-in plan to collect a 75-cent charge on each purchase of prepaid cellphone credits that will result in an additional \$1.4 million per biennium to the 911 system.

Ensuring injured workers get treatment (HB 4104):

When a worker is injured at work and needs treatment, it can take months to confirm that the employer's worker's compensation insurance will accept or deny the claim, which can delay treatment for the injured worker despite existing laws designed to ensure that urgent treatment needs are met. House Bill 4104 requires the employee's health plan to expedite treatment authorizations through the employee's health insurance, then work out payment with the worker's compensation insurance later. This change will help ensure that injured workers get treatment first instead of waiting to determine details of insurance reimbursement.

Improving Oregon's response to youth in crisis (HB 4124):

Updates Oregon's youth suicide prevention plan for the first time in over a decade and expands the duties of Oregon's Youth Suicide Intervention Coordinator to include intervention. HB 4124 also directs the Oregon Health Authority to begin assessing the barriers youth and families encounter when trying to get help in times of crisis.

Protecting privacy of public transit riders (HB 4086):

Unless public interest requires disclosure, exempts personally identifiable information collected by mass transit electronic fare systems from disclosure under public records law.

Supporting public safety officers (SB 1518):

Narrows the definition of "supervisory employee," improving the safety and collective bargaining rights of firefighters and police officers around the state.

Rob Libke Scholarship Act (HB 4120):

Adds volunteer firefighters and reserve police officers and sheriff's deputies to the Oregon Student Access Commission's deceased and disabled public safety officer grant program. The bill honors fallen Oregon City Reserve Police Officer Rob Libke, who was shot and killed in November 2013.

Helping minors seek medical or law enforcement help for alcohol consumption (HB 4094):

Provides limited immunity for minors in possession of alcohol if they seek medical assistance for another person in need of medical assistance due to alcohol consumption. Immunity would be limited to violations for minor in possession of alcohol and would not extend to other crimes or violations, such as driving under the influence. Eighteen other states, including Washington and California, have adopted medical amnesty laws.

The Kelsey Smith Act (HB 4022):

Allows law enforcement to use mobile phone location data in a time of emergency to locate someone in danger.

Budget Highlights:

- + Restored \$26 million to the Department of Corrections to ensure stable funding for community corrections, offender management and rehabilitation, and correctional facility operations to keep our communities safe
- + Allocated \$40 million to cover the remaining costs for the 2013 wildfire season
- + Restored funding to Oregon State Police to help hire some state troopers and buy equipment
- + Restored \$1.2 million to the Department of Justice for providing crime victims' services, investigating crimes against children, supporting district attorneys, and conducting organized crime investigations

Improving Access to Affordable, High-Quality Health Care

Increased access to medical equipment for seniors, disabled Oregonians (HB 4108): Creates a voluntary pilot program to repurpose wheelchairs, walkers, ventilators, and other medical equipment for seniors and people with disabilities. The pilot program will start in six counties: Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Umatilla, Marion and Polk. This program aims to increase access to equipment, lower costs, and keep material out of landfills.

Affordable and secure home care options (SB 1542): For seniors and those with disabilities, access to homecare can make the difference between being able to live independently, at home, and having to move into some kind of facility. SB 1542 enables private payers to buy home care services from a registry of trusted workers. The Home Care Commission is responsible for screening workers, setting standards, providing referrals, establishing rates, and paying wages.

Improved insurance coverage for colonoscopies (HB 4085): Ensures full insurance coverage for colonoscopies, even when the procedure discovers polyps that are removed as a part of the procedure. Some insurance companies recode the procedure from “preventive” to “therapeutic,” triggering co-pays that do not apply to preventive services.

Helping Oregonians impacted by problems with Cover Oregon rollout (HB 4154): Pushes for individuals and businesses to qualify for premium tax credits, cost-sharing reductions and business tax relief if they went around the exchange and directly to private insurers because of problems with the Cover Oregon website.

Ensuring that no Oregonian with a pre-existing health condition has a gap in health coverage (SB 1582): Establishes a short-term health coverage program for individuals enrolled in the high-risk Oregon Medical Insurance Program who did not enroll in replacement coverage by Dec. 31, 2013.

Supporting pregnant women’s health needs (SB 1562): Requires insurers to provide full coverage of diabetes without any copays for women who are pregnant.

E-Prescriptions (HB 4013): Allows Oregon prescribers to e-prescribe certain medications, providing consistency to state and federal law.

Synchronizing medication refills (SB 1579): Gives Oregonians the right to synchronize their medication refills to avoid repeat visits to the pharmacy.

Budget Highlights:

- + Authorized \$198 million in bonding for OHSU Cancer Research Institute facilities
- + Approved \$270,000 for breast and cervical cancer screenings
- + \$1.3 million to allow more Oregonians to use the state’s registry of home care workers
- + \$2.9 million for drug and alcohol treatment
- + \$1 million to support expansion or improvements to the Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- + \$1 million to build the Beaverton Community Health Collaborative – a multi-service health and wellness facility

Making Government Work Better for Oregonians

Improving accountability, oversight on public IT projects (HB 4122): Requires an Independent Quality Assurance review for all public IT contracts that are over \$5 million and other public IT contracts that meet specific requirements. In order to make sure the additional oversight leads to appropriate action, the bill also requires that the reports are sent to people who can review them promptly and then do something about any problems that are identified.

Increasing Cover Oregon transparency (SB 1562): Requires Cover Oregon to produce an updated business plan for a committee meeting in May and requiring any reports of investigations of Cover Oregon to be made public as quickly as possible.

Helping Oregonians impacted by problems with Cover Oregon rollout (HB 4154): Pushes for individuals and businesses to qualify for premium tax credits, cost-sharing reductions and business tax relief if they went around the exchange and directly to private insurers because of problems with the Cover Oregon website.

State Chief Information Officer (HB 4135): To improve state management of information technology projects, House Bill 4135 outlines the responsibilities of the Chief Information Officer established by the Legislature in 2013. The CIO's duties include advising agencies and executive staff to rigorously govern and manage IT initiatives, verify that agencies implemented IT projects according to specific priorities, and coordinating multi-agency IT projects.

Charity Oversight (HB 4081): To ensure that Oregon's charitable organizations are spending donations on program services, rather than administrative overhead, the Legislature gave the Attorney General the authority to issue an order to disqualify a charitable organization from receiving tax-deductible contributions if 30 percent or less of the charitable organization's total annual expenses were spent on program services. House Bill 4081 provides further oversight and enforcement tools by allowing suspension, revocation, or denial of the registration of a charitable organization that willfully fails to provide required information or provides misleading or false statements on registration documents or annual reports.

Budget Highlights:

- + Rebalanced agency budgets to make modest but important investments in priority programs and ensure state reserves are adequate to manage any emerging needs during the rest of the biennium. After adjustments, the General Fund ending balance is projected to be approximately \$120 million.