



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Historic 2019 Legislative Session Ends

Progressive legislation, investments build a better future for every Oregonian

SALEM – The historic 2019 Oregon legislative session ended tonight after five months of progressive legislative victories that will build a future for Oregon where everyone has access to the best the state has to offer.

The Oregon House Democrats began the session with a “[Pledge to Every Oregonian](#),” committing to tackle some of Oregon’s biggest challenges. The recent attempt by Senate Republicans to hold Oregon’s democracy hostage cannot obscure the truly historic accomplishments of the session:

- The Student Success Act,
- Stable funding for Medicaid,
- Significant reforms to support affordable housing,
- Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance
- Continued efforts to protect civil rights,
- Strong environmental policies that will protect Oregon’s clean air, clean water, and natural beauty, and so much more.

“This was an extraordinary session that delivered for Oregonians in a way no recent legislature has been able to,” House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson (D-Portland). “Last year, we heard loud and clear from Oregonians that they wanted game-changing legislation to improve our state and tackle our most stubborn, decades-old problems. We took aim at truly disastrous policies from the 1990s, and today we stand up to celebrate a new era for Oregon.”

Landmark Investments in Public Education

Following 15 months of public input and a statewide tour that brought legislators to every corner of Oregon, House Democrats ushered through the Student Success Act which will make game-changing investments in every one of Oregon’s public schools. Following decades of disinvestment brought on by 90s-era ballot measures, the \$1 billion per year package seeks to build a model public education system in Oregon through a dedicated, sustainable investment that will improve student outcomes, require ongoing accountability and close opportunity gaps for historically underserved students.

The House Democrats also fought for record funding for the state’s public universities and community colleges. The \$2.2 billion budget included a significant increase in Oregon’s

need-based financial aid program, the Oregon Promise Grant, that will help 2,500 more students afford to go to college.

“This was a game-changing session for education in Oregon,” said Rep. Jeff Reardon (D-Happy Valley). “In addition to the landmark Student Success Act, I am especially proud that we were able to make significant investments in higher education. Our community colleges and universities give our students the opportunity to build the skills they need and succeed in our economy.”

Stable, Affordable Health Care

Oregon House Democrats continued their longstanding commitment to stable, quality and affordable health care this legislative session. Early on in the legislative session, the Oregon House passed House Bill 2010 protecting Oregon’s Medicaid expansion and the health care for Oregon families – including 400,000 children, as well as seniors and people with disabilities – who otherwise could not afford a doctor’s visit and are often forced to go to the emergency room when they are sick.

“Too many Oregonians struggle to access health care,” said Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), chair of the House Committee on Health Care. “Though there is so much more work to be done on this issue, especially on the federal level, I am proud of the work this caucus has done over the years to tackle affordability and increase access for every Oregonian.”

In addition, the legislature voted to increase transparency in prescription drug prices, regulate the middlemen who are driving up the cost of prescription drugs, and ensure non-profit hospitals are providing adequate charity care.

Combating Climate Change and Protecting Oregon’s Natural Beauty

“One of our biggest disappointments from the session is the failure House Bill 2020, known as the Clean Energy Jobs bill,” said Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), who served as co-chair of the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction. “Though it did not advance this session, we will continue to fight for strong, effective legislation to tackle the devastating effects of climate change. We can and must be a national leader on this issue.”

The Oregon House Democrats did advance legislation to protect Oregon’s natural beauty for generations to come. The Oregon Environmental Protection Act ensures that certain strong environmental standards are maintained statewide. The legislature continued a moratorium on fracking and completely banned offshore drilling. House Bill 2007 takes a first step toward healthier air in Oregon, requiring medium and heavy-duty truck owners in the Portland-metro area to begin eliminating old, dirty diesel engines.

Supporting Affordable Housing and Safer Communities

As our state faces a housing affordability crisis, Oregon House Democrats moved a package of bills and record funding to begin moving the dial for vulnerable Oregonians in both urban and rural parts of the state. Senate Bill 608 established statewide rent stabilization, preventing rent spikes and no-cause evictions. House Bill 2001 lifts local bans on smaller, less expensive housing options like duplexes, triplexes, quads and townhomes. House Bill 2002 expands laws regarding the preservation of publicly supported housing.

In addition, the legislature has passed more than \$350 million in funding for renter resources, homeless services and prevention, affordable housing preservation, and housing supply and home ownership.

“For communities all across the state, urban and rural, access to affordable housing is at crisis levels,” said Rep. Tiffany Mitchell (D-North Coast). “While the legislature isn’t going to fix the problem overnight, we made significant progress in providing communities the tools and resources they need to provide Oregonians with a safe place to call home.”

House Bill 2013 ensured that domestic abusers and those who have stalking orders will not be able to access a firearm.

Supporting Working Oregonians and Fighting for a Better Future

Oregon joined just six other states and the District of Columbia this session by establishing a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program, ensuring that no Oregonian has to decide between paying their bills and taking care of a sick loved one, or new baby.

“At some of the most difficult, stressful times of their lives, when the people they love need them the most, hundreds of thousands of Oregonians are forced to choose between their jobs and their loved ones,” said Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn). “With this legislation, that will no longer be the case.”

The legislature also took several steps to protect the rights of working Oregonians. House Democrats led the charge to codify collective bargaining best practices into state law, protecting the rights of public employees. The House also passed the Workplace Fairness Act, legislation that protects Oregonians from workplace discrimination and harassment through a number of provisions that level the playing field between workers and employers.

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, and in effort to improve the culture of the Oregon State Capitol, the Joint Committee on Capitol Culture advanced legislation to fundamentally alter the way the legislature responds to claims of harassment and discrimination. The bipartisan legislation establishes the Legislative Equity Office and outside reporting options to ensure all who work in and visit the Capitol feel safe and welcome.

Seeking Access to Justice and Equal Rights for All

The historic reforms decades in the making also touched on civil rights and criminal justices. The legislature reformed mandatory minimum sentence laws for youth offenders to ensure that 15, 16 and 17-year-olds have a chance at redemption and rehabilitation and strengthened Oregon’s hate crime laws. For those with old marijuana convictions, it will now be easier to have those expunged from their criminal records.

“This was an incredible session in making strides toward ensuring our criminal justice system is fair for all and our state supports every single one of its residents,” said Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Happy Valley). “From sentencing reforms to stronger laws protecting the rights of every Oregonian, we carried through on our commitment to seek access to justice and equal rights for all.”

The Equal Access to Roads Act ensures that every Oregonian will be able to get a driver’s license, regardless of their immigration status.

The House Democrats advanced reforms to remove the influence of money in politics through transparency and limits on campaign spending. The caucus also ensured Oregonians would have more access to the ballot with pre-paid postage.

“As we wrap up the 2019 legislative session, we must not let the controversies overshadow the progress that has been made in pursuit of a better Oregon,” said Rep. Paul Evans (D-Independence and Monmouth). “We can take pride in the incredible work that we have done and set our path forward to a new era in Oregon’s history.”

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