



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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House Democrats: Historic 2021 Session Delivered on Promises to Oregonians

COVID economic relief, wildfire response, housing, and racial justice top Democrats' legislative accomplishments

SALEM, OR--Democrats in the Oregon House celebrated the close of the 81st Regular Legislative Session, which was focused on supporting Oregonians and small businesses impacted by COVID, wildfires, housing and economic instability, and generations of institutional racism.

“For more than a year, Oregon families have come together and made enormous sacrifices—including lost jobs, lost childcare, distance learning, social isolation, health impacts, and, in far too many cases, lost loved ones,” says **House Majority Leader [Barbara Smith Warner](#)** (D-Portland).

“By coming together in this crisis and doing the right thing, Oregonians have saved thousands of lives.

“In this historic session, we focused on an equitable recovery for all Oregonians, not just those at the top. We prioritized support for small businesses, working families, essential workers, and low-income communities across the state in both rural and urban areas, with an emphasis on doing the real work to dismantle systemic racism in our state and support our Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

“Our goal has always been to strengthen the foundations of our economy and build back even better than ever, and I’m proud to say we made enormous progress this session. We’ll be back in February 2022 to continue this critical work.”

Before the start of the session, House Democrats outlined the Caucus’s top priorities. The following includes major legislative successes in each of those category areas. **A more comprehensive list can be found here: [2021 Legislative Session Bills.](#)**

Economic Recovery for All Oregon

The multiple crises of the past year—COVID, wildfires, ice storms—amplified existing economic instability for many Oregonians. House Democrats focused on providing support for frontline workers, small businesses, rural communities, and other impacted communities.

“It’s been a tough year of sacrifices for so many Oregon families,” says [Rep. David Gombert](#) (D-Central Coast). “As we rebuild, it’s critical that our efforts lift up everyone, especially those who’ve been left behind for too long. The work of this session is a great step toward building a future where every community can thrive.”

A partial list of bill highlights supporting Oregon’s economic recovery:

- [HB 3073](#): Comprehensive support for Oregon’s childcare system to address the alarming lack of access keeping parents from rejoining the workforce.
- [HB 2266](#): Improves access to capital for small businesses, especially those who’ve faced discrimination in lending and small business support.
- [HB 2345](#): Establishes the Oregon Rural Capacity Fund to assist in securing economic development grants for rural communities.
- [SB 483](#): Protects frontline workers from retaliation for reporting unsafe working conditions.
- [HB 2341](#), [HB 3218](#), [HB 2607](#), [HB 3272](#), and [HB 2289](#): Supports families and small businesses rebuilding after last year’s wildfires.

Education and Workforce Development

The COVID pandemic upended all our lives. For students, it meant social isolation and missing nearly a full year of in-class instruction; for parents, it often meant juggling remote work with

homeschool duties. This session, House Democrats worked to create support for students, families, and educators to prepare for a full return in the fall.

“While the public health safeguards saved thousands of lives, it also meant that a lot of students struggled with distance learning,” says [Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon](#) (D-Woodburn), chair of the House Education Committee. “Our educators did an outstanding job in the face of very difficult circumstances. Educators and students, especially BIPOC students who were underserved even before COVID, need robust, targeted support as we reopen our schools.”

A partial list of bill highlights supporting Oregon’s schools and workforce development:

- [SB 5514](#): Funds K-12 schools at a record \$9.3 billion, the largest school budget in Oregon history.
- [HB 5042](#): Provides \$250 million to districts and community organizations for summer learning and enrichment programs.
- [HB 2166](#): Creates a comprehensive approach to improving equity and supporting BIPOC students.
- [HB 2590](#): Gives students a voice; establishes Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education that includes BIPOC, rural, low-income, and other underrepresented students.
- [SB 52](#): Creates an inclusive statewide education plan for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, intersex, asexual, nonbinary, or any other minority gender identity.
- [HB 2166](#): Prioritizes connecting students and parents with social workers and mental health resources, rather than disciplinary actions that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth due to structural racism and a lack of culturally-appropriate and specific care.

Equity and Justice for All

Building a future where everyone can thrive requires intentional action to undo generations of racist discrimination and oppression that have harmed BIPOC communities. This session, House Democrats continued fighting for reforms to policing to ensure everyone can feel safe—as well as systemic reforms to how policy decisions are made and power is shared, prioritizing community agency. Many of the policies across categories—from housing and education, to economic investments and environmental justice—were developed through a racial equity lens.

“We passed a long list of equitable policing reforms this year by appealing to our shared humanity,” says [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#) (D-Happy Valley), chair of the House Judiciary Committee and Equitable Policing Subcommittee. “Until that sense of shared humanity is

deliberately threaded through all of our systems, we'll continue to live in a state where some lives matter more than others. Transformation requires an intentional commitment by leaders at every level.”

A partial list of policing, court, and justice reform and equity bills:

- [HB 2575](#): Ensures police have training to provide a trauma-informed response to best meet the needs of the public and build community trust.
- [HB 3145](#): Requires law enforcement to report any discipline resulting in economic sanctions against an officer, to report that information to the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) for publication on their database.
- [HB 2936](#): Strengthens background checks for law enforcement officers, including character assessments. Instructs agencies to develop social media policies Requires DPSST to create a uniform background check.
- [HB 2513](#): Requires law enforcement be trained in airway and circulatory anatomy and physiology and certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation; requires emergency response is someone who is restrained shows signs of respiratory distress
- [HB 2928](#): Regulates the use of tear gas and munitions in protests. Creates accommodations for people with disabilities.
- [HB 2936](#): Strengthens background checks for law enforcement officers, including character assessments. Instructs agencies to develop social media policies Requires DPSST to create a uniform background check.
- [HB 2986](#): Requires law enforcement to be trained to investigate crimes motivated by gender bias.
- [SB 621](#): Establishes local civilian oversight boards to oversee disciplinary matters concerning law enforcement.
- [HB 2204](#): Creates Restorative Justice grants for local communities
- [HB 3265](#): Updates the Sanctuary Promise Act to protect immigrant and refugee communities and prioritize public safety, keeping local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities separate.
- [SB 778](#): Establishes the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement that will partner with immigrant and refugee communities to provide policy support to communities across the state.

Protecting Public Health

The past year has shown the world the importance of strong public health systems, and not just during pandemics. This session saw long-needed improvements to Oregon’s public health programs, including game-changing investments in behavioral health supports.

“Too many Oregonians are in crisis, and years of federal disinvestment in behavioral and mental health has had tragic results,” says [Rep. Rob Nosse](#) (D-Portland), co-chair of the budget

subcommittee on Human Services. “The investments we’re making this session will save lives, bring healing, and restore families.”

“If the pandemic has done any good at all, it has placed a bright spot light on our lack of investment into our Behavioral Health system and while that light is harsh, it was necessary for us to see what needed to be done,” said [Rep. Tawna Sanchez](#) (D-Portland), vice chair of the Human Services and Housing Committee. “The Behavioral Health package has the potential to add significant investment into systems and services that will support the health and wellbeing of Oregonians as we begin to recover from the pandemic. The package also puts us in a place to build on existing structures in a way that we have not been able to do in the past.”

A partial list of public health and behavioral health highlights:

- [SB 755](#): Implements Ballot Measure 110 and invests millions in recovery services.
- [SB 554](#): Requires gun owners to securely store their firearms to reduce gun deaths.
- [SB 587](#): Creates a Tobacco Retail Licensure program.
- [HB 3069](#): Establishes 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline to aid Oregonians experiencing a mental health crisis.
- [HB 2417](#): Provides \$10 million to expand mobile crisis stabilization centers.
- [HB 2086](#): Requires Oregon Health Authority to establish peer and community-driven programs that provide culturally specific and culturally responsive behavioral health services.
- \$350 million in Behavioral Health investments, including:
 - \$80 million for diversifying and expanding behavioral health workforce
 - \$20 million for Behavioral Health Housing Fund
 - \$5 million to fund the 988 crisis line
 - \$121.4 million for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics

Access to Health Care

Every Oregonian deserves access to quality, affordable, and accessible health care. This session built on Oregon’s leadership in expanding access to all Oregonians.

“No one should have to make a decision between putting food on the table or going to the doctor when they’re ill,” says [Rep. Andrea Salinas](#) (D-Lake Oswego), vice chair of the House Healthcare Committee. “I’m proud that Oregon continues to recognize that health care is a right, regardless of your income, your race, your ethnicity, your skin color, or where you were born.”

“Healthy individuals mean healthy communities,” says [Rep. Rachel Prusak](#) (D-West Linn), chair of the House Healthcare Committee. “By expanding access, lowering costs, and supporting vulnerable Oregonians, we’re continuing the work of addressing long standing inequities in healthcare outcomes.”

A partial list of health care highlights:

- [HB 3352](#): Cover All People, expands eligibility for the Oregon Health Plan, including to DACA recipients.
- [SJR 12](#): Asks voters to amend the Oregon Constitution declaring healthcare a right.
- [HB 2359](#): Requires health care providers to work with health care interpreters from health care interpreter registry operated by Oregon Health Authority to provide interpretation services.
- [HB 2508](#): Increases reimbursement rates for telehealth providers, improving access for patients in rural and underserved areas.
- [SB 844](#): Creates the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to review and lower prices of certain prescription drugs.

A Place to Call Home

Long before the COVID crisis began and before wildfires devastated many communities, Oregon faced a housing crisis. Addressing this crisis requires action on many fronts, and House Democrats have led the way for multiple sessions. Thanks to federal recovery funds, the legislature was able to make \$600 million in housing investments this session.

“The housing crisis is felt in every corner of the state, in both urban and rural areas,” says [Rep. Julie Fahey](#) (D-Eugene, Junction City), chair of the House Committee on Housing. “The investments we’ve made this session will help those who need a place to call home, whether they were impacted by wildfires, skyrocketing housing costs, or ongoing economic instability.”

“The pandemic illustrated more clearly than ever that ensuring Oregonians have access to stable and secure housing is not only a moral right but also a public health benefit. These bills are just a few of many passed this session to protect our most vulnerable community members from homelessness and housing instability,” says [Rep. Wlmsvey Campos](#) (D-Aloha), vice chair of the House Committee on Housing.

A partial list of housing highlights:

- [HB 2009](#): Extends COVID foreclosure protections for struggling homeowners

- [HB 2004](#): Provides \$9.7 million for shelter assistance
- [HB 2006](#): Expedites and expands the siting of emergency shelter housing.
- [HB 2544](#): Provides \$3.6 million in supports for unaccompanied homeless youth
- [HB 5042](#): Provides \$20 million to build navigation centers in seven impacted communities
- [SB 278](#) and [SB 282](#): Extends eviction protections for struggling renters who've applied for assistance funds; expands Landlord Compensation Fund to keep landlords whole. Provides additional time for tenants to repay back rent accrued during the pandemic emergency.

Environmental Justice & Wildfires (Climate Change)

The impacts of climate change in Oregon can't be ignored, as we grapple with historic droughts, devastating wildfires, and unpredictable winter storms. Reducing the state's carbon footprint will require bold, ongoing action.

“The good news is that we have the tools and knowledge to address climate change and build disaster resilience, while also creating good jobs and economic opportunity in every corner of the state,” says [Rep. Khanh Pham](#) (D-Portland), who serves on the House Energy and Environment Committee. “The impacts of climate change are felt most by low-income and BIPOC communities—legislation we passed this year recognizes that we need to protect and support those communities as we shift away from fossil fuels.”

A partial list of environmental bill highlights:

- [HB 2021](#): 100% Clean Energy - Invests \$50 million in local jobs and clean energy for rural, coastal, low-income and BIPOC communities. This is the strongest electricity emissions reduction timeline in the country, setting the goal of 100% clean energy by 2040.
- [HB 2842](#): Healthy Homes - Invests in home repairs for low-income Oregonians to improve energy efficiency, safety and drive down costs.
- [HB 2165](#): Ensures low-income households can receive rebates to make electric vehicles affordable and accessible.
- [SB 762](#): Coordinates a statewide response to plan for and mitigate wildfires with a focus on community preparedness and public health (\$188 million).
- [SB 582](#): Modernizes Oregon's recycling system, setting statewide rates for plastic and recycling contamination reduction goals and increases accessibility in rural areas and apartment complexes.
- [HB 2927](#): Restructures and modernizes Oregon's emergency management system to better respond to natural disasters.

Modernizing the Legislature

The political and decision-making process has long shut out the voices of BIPOC communities, low-income workers, single parents, and more. Oregon’s Legislature needs to continually reform the way it works to be more truly reflective of everyone who calls this state home. This year, House Democrats took steps to make the Capitol accessible to more diverse voices.

“Our legislative work will be stronger when we know that everyone has a seat at the table,” says [Rep. Mark Meek](#) (D-Oregon City), co-chair of the House Committee on Modernizing the Legislature. “That means making it easier for working folks to engage with their legislators, influence the political process, and run for office. This will require structural reform, and I’m proud that we’ve begun talking about how to reform the way we do things.”

A partial list of bills reforming the legislative process:

- [HB 2992](#): Requires compensation for service on boards and commissions, enabling more people to serve and influence policy.
- [HB 2993](#): Requires that the rule-making process include the voices of those who are impacted by policies; requires a statement of how a proposed rule would impact racial equity in the state.
- [HB 3021](#): Requires voting materials be published in the top five languages, increasing access to the ballot and our democracy.
- [HB 2650](#): Requires public meetings to be accessible remotely, ensuring greater access to the democratic process, including for people with disabilities.
- Additionally, funding for language translation services in the Capitol, and dedicated funding for ADA/ASL access is included in the branch budget.

To build on this work over the next six months, House Democrats will continue working with their constituents on key bills to bring forward for the 2022 legislative session.

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