



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon House Democrats Celebrate a Decade of Progress

Caucus notes legislative successes as new year approaches

SALEM, Ore. – As the end of the decade nears, Oregon House Democrats are celebrating 10 years of legislative successes that have built a stronger, more prosperous Oregon.

“Over the last decade, Oregon House Democrats have compiled an incredible record of success, passing forward-looking policies and tackling some of our state’s most persistent challenges,” said House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner. “As we end this decade and look to the future, we celebrate the accomplishments that have been truly game-changing for the people of Oregon.”

Oregon House Democrats have led the charge to pass policies that improve the lives of Oregonians in every corner of our state. Here are just a few highlights of the work that the caucus has done over the last decade:

A Stronger Public Education System

After decades of unstable funding for public education, Oregon House Democrats championed the Student Success Act this year which will provide an additional \$1 billion per year for early childhood education and our public K through 12 system. The caucus also fought for record funding for the state’s higher education system, significant increases in funding for student financial assistance through the Oregon Opportunity Grant and a better pathway for every Oregon student to attend community college through the Oregon Promise. House Democrats also continued to work on making our education system more equitable with the passage of anti-bullying requirements, student success plans for American Indian/Alaska Native, African-American/Black and Latinx students, cultural competency standards for higher education, Oregon tribes curriculum, and Holocaust and genocide education.

Fighting Economic Inequality and Expanding Health Care

Oregon has been at the forefront of policies to fight economic inequality. This includes passing one of the nation’s highest minimum wages in 2016, paid sick leave for almost every Oregon worker in 2015, a Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance program in 2019 and a first-in-the-nation fair scheduling law in 2017. House Democrats also ensured that every Oregonian would have access to a secure retirement by passing OregonSAVES in 2017.

Every Oregonian deserves access to quality, affordable health care. That is why the Oregon House Democrats supported the expansion and transformation of Medicaid (2011 and 2012), insurance coverage for every child (2009 and 2017), and passed the Reproductive Health Equity Act (2017).

Creating Safer, Stronger Communities

Oregonians everywhere should have a safe place to call home. Over the years, hundreds of millions have been invested in creating and preserving affordable housing and landmark housing policy which protects renters from no-cause evictions and rent gouging, as well as reforms to statewide zoning passed in 2019.

Throughout Oregon people should feel safe and secure in their communities. Oregon House Democrats have passed gun violence prevention legislation including universal background checks (2015), a “Red Flag” law (2017) to keep guns out of the hands of those who might do harm to themselves or others and closed a loophole that allowed some domestic abusers and stalkers access to firearms (2018).

Supporting Every Part of Oregon

Every Oregonian should have the ability to achieve their American dream. Oregon has had some of the strongest economic growth since the Great Recession. Oregon House Democrats have been working to boost small businesses and encourage living-wage job growth in every part of the state. This includes two historic transportation packages (2009 and 2017), the creation of the Office of Small Business Assistance in 2013 and small business advisory committees in 2018 to give small business owners an ongoing voice within their state government.

Additionally, over the last decade, House Democrats have championed millions of dollars in construction bonds for our higher education campuses, including matching grants to every community college in the state. The OSU Cascade Campus in Bend is now a reality.

House Democrats have also worked to make strategic investments that specifically benefit rural communities, including record funding for the Oregon State University Extension Service, water storage and water supply development, fire resilience, and seismic preparedness and resilience.

A Healthier Environment

Oregon House Democrats have been working to protect our environment and move our state forward. In 2016, the Legislature passed Coal-to-Clean legislation to move the state off of coal and on the road to cleaner, renewable energy. In 2015, the Clean Fuels Program to reduce carbon intensity in transportation fuels was made permanent. The Legislature also banned off-shore drilling, put a moratorium on fracking in 2019, passed new air quality requirements with Cleaner Air Oregon in 2018 and diesel emissions reduction targets in 2019.

A Fairer, More Equitable Oregon

Oregon House Democrats have long been working to build a more fair, equitable state. This includes significant criminal justice reforms in 2013, 2017 and 2019 that seek to make smarter investments to ensure accountability for offenders, make our communities safer and improve outcomes. In 2015, legislation passed a bill prohibiting profiling by law enforcement based on race, gender, sexual orientation, housing status, or other protected identities. The Legislature also

“banned the box,” ending the practice of employers asking about potential employees’ past criminal convictions. The caucus has strengthened laws protecting survivors of sexual assault and sex trafficking and closed the backlog of untested rape kits.

Oregon House Democrats championed increased protections for immigrant communities, strengthening Oregon’s status as a sanctuary state in 2017, providing funding for immigrants in need of legal services in 2019 and ensuring that every Oregonian, regardless of legal status, was able to get a driver’s license (2019).

In the face of unprecedented attacks on unions, Oregon House Democrats have stood with workers. In 2009, House Democrats required majority sign-up for all public employees and employers and banned employers from holding captive audience meetings on religion, politics and unionization. This year, we put into law collective bargaining best practices and ensured all public employees have basic protections to belong to a union.

The caucus has continued to work to ensure Oregon’s LGBTQIA+ community have equality under the law. Conversion therapy for minors was banned in 2015, and legislation was passed in 2017 making it safer and easier for transgender Oregonians to ensure their legal documents accurately reflect who they are. Earlier this year, Oregon updated its hate crimes law to cover both gender identity and sexual orientation.

As other states worked to make it harder to vote, Oregon led the nation in making it easier. In 2015, Oregon became the first state to pass automatic voter registration and earlier this year, paid postage for ballots became the law.

Oregon has also made historic investments in veterans over the last decade. Measure 96, a ballot referral from the Legislature that dedicated lottery proceeds to veterans’ services, passed overwhelmingly in 2016. The Legislature has also dedicated funding to support veterans’ homes across the state and made progress to help veterans connect with good jobs and education.

“This is just a sampling of everything that we have accomplished this decade,” Smith Warner added. “As we look to the opportunity of a new decade and the need for Oregon to continue tackling its biggest challenges, including action on the climate crisis, I am excited to continue the work to make Oregon a great place for everyone to call home. Oregon House Democrats will never stop fighting for the people of Oregon and a better future for all.”

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