



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2011

Contact Geoff Sugerman (503) 986-1907

Michael Cox (503) 986-1904

House Democrats Conclude 2011 Session With Solid List of Accomplishments

*Increased Education Funding, Jobs Legislation, Expansion of Bottle Bill and Health Care
Advances Highlight Key Achievements of House Democrats*

SALEM – Oregon House Democrats conclude the 2011 legislative session with a solid list of accomplishments that includes increasing the projected dollars for K-12 schools by \$178 million from the Governor’s Recommended Budget, several new laws to help create jobs, strong improvements to health care and the passage of legislative priorities for [House Democratic caucus members](#).

As the session began, House Democrats released a list of priorities to [Revitalize Oregon](#), many of which have now become law. As Oregon’s economic fortunes improved during the session – bolstered by one of the nation’s fastest growing job markets (by percentage over the past year), a series of positive revenue forecasts and the implementation of 2009 and 2010 legislation that has helped to create jobs – House Democrats achieved solid gains with legislation to spur [job creation](#) and make it easier for Oregon’s small businesses to grow and expand.

“Expectations may not have been high for a productive session. But House Democrats focused on making small, but substantial steps forward in a number of critical areas while protecting the gains made in the previous two sessions,” said House Democratic Leader Dave Hunt (D-Clackamas County). “From strengthening our economy to fighting for every last education dollar, House Democrats showed a dogged determination to move the ball forward in a number of key areas.”

House Democrats pointed to the following accomplishments in the 2011 session:

- Increasing education funding from the original GRB of \$5.56 billion to the current level of \$5.738 billion with an opportunity for \$56 million more in February.

- Passing “Cool Schools” legislation to provide jobs retrofitting Oregon’s aging schools with energy efficient components.
- Implementing the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange and the Health Care Transformation Act, two key steps forward in providing Oregonians with access to affordable health care.
- Reducing tax credits to protect more resources for education, health care and public safety.
- Helping small businesses through programs like Buy Oregon, Farm to Schools, funding for OregonInC and expansion of the BOOST program.
- Expansion of Oregon’s Bottle Bill.
- Additional funding for Pre-K programs and additional education reform efforts to provide a more seamless 0-20 education system.

But the equally divided House did ensure that a number of critical bills were killed with the ability of either side to block legislation. Bills to ban BPA in baby products, help families facing foreclosure, put limits on swipe card fees charged by banks and develop an Economic Development and Fairness Authority to provide capital for small businesses all died without a floor vote as House Republican leadership refused to allow these bills to be voted on by the full House.

Still the session’s main focus was on balancing the state’s budget following a three year global recession that caused revenue to plunge and forced Oregonians into unemployment. Now, as the session concludes, Ways and Means Democratic Co-Chair Peter Buckley said the state’s economy is clearly on the mend.

“The work we did the past three years to protect critical services, find efficiencies in state government and ask all of our workers to do more with less has paid off,” said Buckley (D-Ashland). “Unemployment is down significantly. We’ve had two positive revenue forecasts and it’s clear we have managed through the worst of this recession in far better shape than most other states. Oregonians should be proud of the work we’ve done this session to pave the way for a strong and steady economic recovery.”

Additional Quotes from House Democratic Leadership Members:

Co-Speaker Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay):

“This Legislature put our political differences aside and came together for the people of Oregon. We performed our constitutional duties with firm resolve toward helping Oregon through these difficult economic times. The equally divided House meant all of us had equal power. We used that power wisely, to make life better for Oregonians.”

Speaker Pro-Tem Tina Kotek (D-Portland)

“On critical issues including health care, education and human services, we fought to protect the Oregonians who rely on those services. In these difficult economic times, it meant many difficult choices and many hard votes. Despite our differences, every member of this Legislature worked hard to move Oregon forward. We may not have always agreed on the best path. But we moved forward on critical issues like health care and education. There’s more work to accomplish, but we can leave here today knowing we did right by Oregon in many critical areas.”

Rep. Phil Barnhart (D-Central Lane and Linn Counties):

“Coming into this session, we faced a state economy that threatened the very livelihood of our families. Through the work we have done these past three years – including the six months of session – we’ve made life a little better for Oregonians. We tackled some difficult issues and we made progress. Now, as we look to the future, we continue to work to improve our economy and help our citizens. We remain dedicated to that effort.”

Rep. Val Hoyle (D-Junction City):

“Every Oregonian who gets back to work this year means a healthier and more vibrant Oregon. We have weathered incredibly difficult times with wise investments, difficult cuts and hard work. Just like every Oregon family, this Legislature had its difficult moments. But we came together to do the work you elected us to accomplish.”

Rep. Tobias Read (D-Beaverton):

“This session, despite the challenging budget climate, House Democrats found a way to ensure important investments in innovation, through programs like OregonInC, and to make the Oregon University System more autonomous and efficient. These would be victories in any session, and that we got them done this session should be counted as a major accomplishment.”

Rep. Jefferson Smith (D-Portland):

“We took meaningful strides this session towards a better economy and a better government. Through high-road economic strategies like Grow Oregon and Cool Schools, we can foster an economy that is prosperous, sustainable, and just. Through redesigning the mechanisms of government – in health care, education, budgeting, voter access, and more – we can better advance our shared objectives.”

Rep. Jules Bailey (D-Portland):

“House Democrats advanced an agenda that included a major restructuring of government institutions and functions, including our system of tax credits. We were committed to spending our resources more efficiently, creating jobs and ensuring Oregon continues to be at the forefront of the global clean energy economy.”

Rep. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis/Philomath):

“Despite very challenging circumstances, we've passed strong legislation to improve educational opportunities for Oregon kids. Our agenda improved student safety, expanded access to career and technical education, strengthened teacher preparation, eased access to higher education for at risk students and improved access to flexible learning options for all students.”