



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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House works together to increase school funding during special session

SALEM – Today the Oregon legislature passed a series of bills that will bring significant new support to public schools, community colleges, and universities throughout the state.

Inadequate funding and rising costs have caused over 7,000 teacher layoffs, lost school days, and skyrocketing tuition costs in recent years. Even with the \$1 billion boost to state education funding that the legislature passed earlier this year, children throughout Oregon are sitting in some of the most crowded classrooms in the country. One third of Oregon's school districts are down to four days of classes per week.

“The negotiations to get to this point were complex, but the result is simple: the Oregon legislature came together for Oregon's schools,” said House Majority Leader Val Hoyle (D – Eugene). “Instead of taking the D.C.-style path to a partisan shutdown, this package was developed and supported by both parties. Today was a show of statesmanship in our Capitol and a turning point for our state.”

The legislature boosted funding for public schools by \$100 million, which could allow districts to add up to 2,000 new teachers over the next two years. The legislature also approved \$40 million to hold down tuition increases at Oregon's universities and community colleges; \$20 million to support mental health services; \$41 million to support senior programs; and \$12 million to help more low-income families qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

“We took a stand for the future of education in Oregon today,” said Representative Peter Buckley (D – Ashland), co-chair of the Ways and Means Committee. “Genuine compromise is not easy to achieve, but it is what Oregonians expect. Long, careful negotiations allowed us to forge a path to increase funding for our schools.”

House Democrats voiced a wide range of opinions on the five bills heard today. Ultimately, the benefits for schools – both immediate and long-term – led to strong bipartisan support for each measure. (See below for links to policy details.)

“Our children cannot wait for a politically perfect solution,” said Representative John Lively (D – Springfield). “We needed to act today to secure a stronger future for Oregon.”

The Oregon House today approved the following bills:

[House Bill 3601](#) – raises \$244 million in new revenue.

- **Passed the House by a vote of 36 – 19.**

[House Bill 5101](#) – appropriates approximately \$200 million to Oregon’s public schools, community colleges, universities, mental health services, senior programs, and support for low-income families.

- **Passed the House by a vote of 54 – 1.**

[Senate Bill 861](#) – makes additional cuts to the cost-of-living adjustments received by PERS retirees while mitigating impacts on lower-wage workers.

- **Passed the House by a vote of 31 – 24.**

[Senate Bill 862](#) – reforms certain policies related to the PERS system.

- **Passed the House unanimously.**

[Senate Bill 863](#) – preempts local bans on agricultural seed except in counties where local ordinances have already qualified for the ballot.

- **Passed the House by a vote of 32 – 22.**

The package of bills now moves to the desk of Governor Kitzhaber, who has pledged to sign them all.

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