

Finally Over! Summary of the 2013 Session and My Priorities.

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3:55 PM



State Representative **Alissa Keny-Guyer**



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

My first full session finally ended on July 8th after five long months. I'm holding a Town Hall on August 3rd (details to follow); however, here is a summary.

Overall, it was a very productive session. Highlights include:

- * reversing years of disinvestment in education and increasing access to higher education
- * reorganizing early childhood and higher education governance for more local control
- * streamlining regulations and loans for farmers and small businesses
- * increasing housing options and foreclosure mediation for vulnerable populations
- * making needed reforms to our public safety system
- * holding banks and insurance companies more accountable
- * passing environmental bills that increase energy efficiency in appliances, expand the charging network for electric vehicles, and restrict suction dredge mining
- * commissioning studies on carbon tax, "Pay it Forward" college tuition, Equal Pay, retirement security, and health care financing
- * providing access to tuition equity and driver's permits for immigrants who want to contribute to our economy while our nation works towards immigration reform
- * continuing our nationally recognized efforts to provide affordable, quality healthcare

Due to reductions in PERS, a bill to collect taxes from off shore tax havens, leveraging of federal funds, and a slowly recovering economy that produced \$272 million over the expected revenue for the biennium, we provided:

- * a record-breaking \$1 billion more in K-12 schools than in the past biennium
- * targeted education investments in Career Technical Education and professional development
- * increases in early childhood, community colleges, universities, community mental health, home care workers, social services, and Farm to School
- * expansion of the Oregon Health Plan to cover citizens up to 133% of poverty and all low-income pregnant women
- * tax credit extensions for EITC, Cultural Trust, Farmworker housing, and other programs
- * bonding for construction projects for community colleges and universities (including PSU and PCC), Multnomah County Courthouse, Oregon Convention Center Hotel, low income housing preservation, Regional Solutions, and Connect Oregon multi-

modal non-highway projects - including bike and pedestrian for the first time.

While these investments will improve our education, workforce development, job opportunities, and social services, we need to invest more fully in these areas (see end of email).

My Primary Focus in the Legislature

My primary focus is to improve the lives of working families - particularly those with fewer resources. I believe that families should have an opportunity for livable wage jobs, affordable housing, quality childcare and education, healthy food and environment, and affordable health care. I am honored to serve on the House Health Care, Human Services and Housing, and Consumer Protection and Government Efficiency committees, which passed numerous bills this session to improve access to these resources.

With a background in public health, I am passionate about improving the health of Oregonians, thereby reducing costs to families, small businesses, and the State. Although much attention has been paid to PERS, health care costs are one the fastest growing parts of any budget. We must find ways to reduce addictions and mental illness, obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

I am deeply committed to investing in prevention strategies that have the greatest returns - from prenatal care to environmental and public health - with a special focus on women, children, and ethnic groups who suffer the poorest health.

My bills reflect those priorities. Each bill has advocates who have worked for years on these issues; I was honored to partner with them and with fellow legislators. I worked hard to develop bipartisan support, and the final votes usually reflected that.

You can find out more about each bill's co-sponsors, content, testimony, and votes on the [Oregon Legislative Information System](#). I have posted my floor speeches and a comprehensive list of all the bills I chief-sponsored or co-sponsored on my [Legislative Website](#).

However for this summary, I will only describe the bills I championed as drafter and/or (co) chief-sponsor. Of my 25 bills listed below, I am proud that 17 passed, three became work groups, and the others raised important issues for future consideration.

My bills that passed and are becoming law

[HB 2134 Health Equity Data Collection](#) requires Oregon Health Authority and Department of Human Services to adopt uniform standards for collection of data on race, ethnicity, and preferred languages of medical assistance recipients. Disaggregating different ethnic groups (rather than, for instance, lumping all Asian and Pacific Islanders together) provides much more relevant information about health outcomes. With such different biological and cultural distinctions, this data is critical to designing effective intervention strategies.

[HB 2611A Culturally Competent Care](#) requires health-related licensing boards (such as for doctors, nurses, psychologists, dentists, social workers, etc.) to offer cultural competency continuing education. Research shows that culturally competent training improves health outcomes among culturally diverse populations and is needed to

close the disparities. See my national [webinar](#) with Tricia Tillman from the Oregon Health Authority.

[HB 3407 Traditional Health Care Workers Commission](#) establishes a formal advisory committee to the Oregon Health Authority to develop guidelines on how to utilize community health care workers, peer wellness advisors, personal navigators, and doulas in our new Coordinated Care Organizations. Effective use and support of these professions will help ensure improved patient outcomes and cost savings in our new health transformation model.

[HB 3409 Natural Hair Care](#) (courtesy of constituent Amber Starks) amends licensing requirements for those who practice natural hair care (braiding, twisting, styling) using no chemicals. Practitioners will now need certification in "safety and hygiene" rather than a full cosmetology license. This will provide economic opportunities for African Americans and others who have faced barriers in turning this cultural tradition into a livelihood; and we can keep tax dollars earned through this occupation in the State. [See Oregonian for coverage.](#)

[HB 3364 Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\)](#) provides a process to improve IPM on public property, managed by state agencies and universities. In addition to increasing IPM effectiveness, efficiency, and cost savings through coordination, the goal is to use fewer pesticides whenever possible to protect humans and the environment. [See Capital Press for coverage.](#)

[HB 2950 Bereavement Leave](#) amends Oregon's Family Leave Act, which applies to employers with at least 25 employees. Currently, OFLA allows up to 12 weeks unpaid leave for birth, adoption, sick leave, and taking care of sick family members. This new law will allow up to two weeks of unpaid leave (as part of those 12 weeks) within two months of the death of a direct family member. While many companies provide this voluntarily, Oregon is the first state to provide bereavement leave in its Family Leave Act. [See NW Labor Press for coverage.](#)

[HB 2997 Midwifery Licensure](#) requires Direct Entry Midwives to obtain a license to practice. Home births provide a patient-centered, lower cost option for prenatal care and delivery for uncomplicated pregnancies. However, we must ensure that midwives are qualified and that patients have informed consent if they use traditional midwives who are exempted from licensure. Our interim work group led to a compromise after years of failed attempts to address this issue. [See Oregonian to learn more.](#)

[HB 2612 Placenta Removal](#) provides that a postpartum mother may remove a placenta from a health care facility. Many hospitals have been granting the request by mothers to bring their placenta home (which is very important in some cultures), not knowing it has been illegal under Oregon law. In addition to legalizing this practice, the bill instructs Oregon Health Authority to establish rules to ensure public health and informed consent. [See AP for coverage.](#)

[HB 2013 Early Childhood Council](#) directs how early childhood "hubs" will be developed in each region, and folds the governance of these hubs, the child care division, and other early childhood services under the Department of Education to better align it with K-12. It expands prenatal care, home visiting programs, and services for children with disabilities, and provides an innovation fund for Kindergarten readiness pilot programs. I was honored to work with fellow legislators and early childhood advocates to shape this legislation.

[SB 123 Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#) requires Department of Human Services to adopt rules to enable foster youth to know what their rights are; for instance, whether they can see their siblings placed with other families, get a driver's license, and know where to turn for advice and complaints. Thank you to the foster youth who initiated this bill! [See Oregonian for coverage](#).

[HB 2921 WIC Farm Direct Program](#) was folded into the budget, providing \$100,000 for \$20 vouchers for low-income pregnant women and children to use at farmers' markets and food stands. This improves nutrition at a time most needed while also supporting our local food economy.

[HB 2729 After-School Meals and Snack Program](#) doubled the amount available for schools serving low-income kids from \$180,000 to \$360,000 per biennium, leveraging USDA funds.

[HB 2730 Summer Meal Program](#) for low-income kids will allow for breakfast in addition to lunch for the first time.

[HB 2355 Problem Gambling](#) modifies the method for determining the allocation of lottery proceeds to the Problem Gambling Treatment Fund to ensure a minimum amount each year. This is one of the bills from Rep. Carolyn Tomei's task force, which I joined last year.

[HB 2609 Court Audits](#) (courtesy of constituent, Multnomah County Auditor, and former House District 46 Representative Steve March) eliminates the need for counties to audit the circuit courts since the State auditor already conducts these audits.

[HB 3523 Campaign Finance](#) changes the way independent expenditures and in-kind donations are reported to increase transparency in our elections.

[HR 5 PHAME Academy](#) is honored on its upcoming 30th anniversary for engaging people with disabilities in the Arts and sharing performances with over 10,000 people each year.

My bills that became work groups

[HB 2137 Durable Medical Equipment](#) (courtesy of constituent David Komeiji) will become a legislative work group to study how the Oregon Health Plan can save money by re-using durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, crutches, and prostheses. After a plan is developed, I will introduce legislation to enact it.

[HB 3403 Healthy Vending](#) will become an Oregon Health Authority work group. This bill started as a requirement that vending machines in public buildings carry only healthy snacks. The blind vendors who operate them proposed a task force to study how to best convert to healthier options. I look forward to working with the Commission for the Blind, public employees, PEBB, vending companies, public health groups, and a national vending task force on this initiative. [See national coverage by NPR](#).

[HB 3390 Paid Sick Leave](#) will become a work group to study how Oregonians can earn paid sick leave, as policies allow in Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Washington DC, and Connecticut. Taking time off to go to a health provider or take care of a sick

child is critical to maintaining personal health as well as protecting the public health by reducing the spread of disease.

My bills that didn't pass, but which I plan to re-introduce

[HB 3162 Toxics Disclosure for Healthy Kids Act](#) would require the Oregon Health Authority to identify the "priority chemicals of concern to children" and would require manufacturers with over \$5 million in annual sales to disclose any of 19 toxic chemicals in their children's products within two years. Within five years, manufacturers would need to phase out these chemicals in certain products unless they can show there is no exposure or no safer, economically feasible alternative on the market.

This was the first legislation I introduced in 2012, and it passed the House this year with 39 votes. I was gravely disappointed that it lacked one vote to come to the Senate floor. Because of the enormous cost that toxic chemicals cause to our health, education, and social services-not to mention human lives, I will continue working on this legislation. See [KATU](#) for video coverage and the Portland Tribune for an [article](#) by my constituent Tomasz Beer.

[HB 2516 Outdoor School](#) would help fund experiential learning for 6th grade students in the protection and restoration of native fish or wildlife habitats, watersheds, or ecosystems. Outdoor School has been a critical part of our children's education for over 50 years; yet today less than half of our kids get this chance. We need to find ways to support Outdoor School for all kids across the state.

[HB 3412 Gun Control Task Force](#) and [HB 3413 Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Minors](#) were not heard since the decision was made to hear all gun related bills in the Senate. I am disappointed that no bills passed to reduce gun usage by those who shouldn't have access. My constituents who lost loved ones in the Clackamas Town shooting testified eloquently in favor of reasonable laws, and I look forward to continuing these efforts in the future. I also hope to reintroduce [HB 2014 Related to Abduction of Children](#), which is long overdue.

Other issues for future sessions

There are several other bills, introduced by committees or by colleagues, which I was sad to see fail. In the next session, I hope we will pass such bills as [SB 488 Clean Fuels](#) to address climate change and grow our green economy.

One of the hardest issues we faced was the growing unfunded liability in PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) due in large part to the 2008 stock market crash, and in part to past (Tier 1) policies. With a growing portion of our public budgets devoted to PERS benefits, we made the painful decision to reduce Cost of Living increases for retirees. We also eliminated the tax reimbursement for out-of-state retirees who don't pay our state income tax. I support future adjustments as needed in order to reinvest in education and public services; however, I will work to protect those with the smallest pensions and to seek shared sacrifice from those who can most afford it.

On that note, I am deeply disappointed that we did not pass a revenue bill that raises taxes on large corporations, reduces tax credits/deductions to higher income Oregonians, and increases the tobacco tax. The tobacco tax is \$1.18/pack in Oregon

compared to Washington's \$3/pack; in addition to raising revenue, the tax is also a "cost containment" by reducing tobacco use. Oregon wastes over \$1.2 billion in tobacco-related health care costs each year! I will continue to advocate for cost containments and revenue reforms that will provide long-term sustainable savings and investments.

Stay in touch!

I will be working on several interim work groups until the February 2014 session, as well as choosing two bills to introduce in that short session. I am eager to stay in touch during that time:

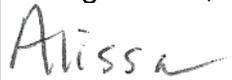
* Stay tuned for details about the "Sustainability" Bike Town Hall that Sen. Jackie Dingfelder, Rep. Michael Dembrow and I are co-sponsoring with Portland Bureau of Transportation at 10am on August 3, as well as my neighborhood coffee immediately following that for people who want to debrief other legislative issues.

* Check my public Facebook page for continual updates about district events and local/national legislation.

* Contact my legislative aide, Roberto Gutierrez, at (971) 950-1367, who works year round and always has a smile!

Lastly, I want to thank Roberto and my session staff, Bryan Little, and interns, Jillian Johnsen, Patrick Stupfel, and Rebecca Hayes. Their support, along with partnerships and encouragement from constituents, advocates, and fellow legislators, helped advance many important bills during the 2013 session.

With gratitude,



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