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900 Court St., N.E., Room H-269

Salem OR 97301

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/kotek/>

NEWS RELEASE

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Lindsey O'Brien, 503-986-1204

Lindsey.obrien@state.or.us

LEGISLATURE ADJOURNS 2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION Session Brings Major Wins for Working Families, Women

SALEM – The Oregon House of Representatives adjourned sine die today, five days before the July 11 constitutional deadline for adjournment.

The work of the 2015 Legislature focused on creating real and lasting opportunity for all Oregon families by leveling the playing field and breaking down barriers that stand in the way for too many Oregonians.

“This session will be remembered as the year we put opportunity for working families first,” said House Speaker Tina Kotek (D – North/NE Portland). “We made education a top priority because every Oregonian deserves a fair chance to succeed. We focused on leveling the playing field because too many women and working families have been left behind by the economic recovery. Together, the legislature made progress that will benefit families in every corner of Oregon.”

Highlights of the session include:

Investing in a Strong Education System

- A \$7.4 billion investment in public schools will provide stable budgets for most school districts while also funding full-day kindergarten for children throughout Oregon for the first time.
- A \$35 million investment in Career and Technical Education and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education (CTE/STEM) will help increase high school graduation rates and better prepare Oregon students for high-wage jobs.
- Students seeking higher education will benefit from boosts in funding for public universities, community colleges, and student financial assistance (Opportunity Grants) – including a new tuition waiver program for qualified community college students and a requirement that public universities justify any proposed tuition increases above 3 percent in 2016-17.

- New investments in early childhood education – notably Healthy Families home visiting, relief nurseries, and quality preschool – will help ensure children arrive at school ready to succeed.

Expanding Opportunities for Working Families

- The Sick Leave for All Oregonians Act will make sure most working Oregonians can accrue a reasonable number of paid sick days each year – a basic workplace protection that will make a major difference for families across the state.
- Oregon Retirement Savings Accounts will give more families the opportunity to save for retirement via an easy, effective, and portable savings account.
- Prohibiting employer retaliation for discussing what you earn will help combat wage disparities and help women who currently do not get equal pay for equal work.
- Strategic investments in the Employment Related Day Care Program and the Working Family Child and Dependent Care tax credit will increase access to quality, affordable childcare for working families.
- A landmark investment in affordable housing construction will help thousands of families and begin to tackle Oregon’s statewide housing crisis.
- Removing questions about criminal history from job applications, commonly known as “ban the box,” will help Oregonians get back on their feet once they have served their time.

Supporting Job Creation and Local Economies

- A \$175 million bonding investment will enable seismic upgrades to K-12 schools throughout the state, and an additional \$125 million in bonds will help school districts across the state to fix outdated, dilapidated, and hazardous facilities.
- A \$90 million investment in Oregon’s transportation infrastructure will provide much-needed upgrades, including \$35 million to improve the safety of some of the most deadly intersections and dangerous stretches of highway in communities across the state.
- Strategic investments will create jobs and spur economic development across the state, including: investments in multimodal transportation through the ConnectOregon program; pivotal resources for community-based initiatives through the Regional Solutions program; and support for converting unusable brownfields such as abandoned gas stations into development-ready lots.
- The implementation of Oregon’s Clean Fuels Program will provide Oregonians with more choices at the fuel pump, cleaner air to breathe, and more jobs in an emerging industry.
- Rural economic investments include \$50 million in grants and loans to help meet water storage and conservation needs, resources to improve sage grouse habitats and maintain grazing lands, and funds to manage and build a market for Western Juniper.
- A fix to Oregon’s centralized property tax rules will provide certainty for technology companies that want to build data centers and create jobs in rural Oregon.

Improving Public Safety for Oregon Families

- A package of common-sense regulations will guide a safe and successful implementation of the voter-approved Measure 91 to legalize recreational marijuana for adults.

- The Oregon Firearms Safety Act will help keep convicted felons, domestic abusers and people in severe mental crisis from buying guns online or through other direct private sales because criminal background checks will now be required for those transactions.
- Barring domestic abusers from possessing guns and ammunition will help protect victims and keep families safe.
- Establishing long-needed rules to define and prohibit racial profiling will help rebuild public trust in local law enforcement and make communities stronger and safer.
- Doubling the statute of limitations for first degree sex crimes from six years to twelve years will give victims a voice and a real chance to seek justice.
- Improving the state's capacity to respond to accidents involving trains carrying hazardous materials will make our communities safer.

Promoting Healthy Communities

- Significant investments in mental health care and alcohol and drug treatment will strengthen communities throughout the state, including \$20 million to build supportive housing for Oregonians impacted by mental illness or addiction.
- Pharmacists will be allowed to prescribe and dispense birth control and insurance companies will be required to cover 12 months of prescription coverage – both of which will increase access to contraception and help reduce unintended pregnancies.
- The Oregon Toxic Free Kids Act will require some manufacturers to incrementally phase out dangerous chemicals from kids' products.
- Cover Oregon has been abolished as a public corporation, which will add much-needed transparency and accountability to Oregon's health insurance marketplace.
- Vulnerable patients (victims of domestic violence, for example) will be able to keep their sensitive medical information private by having their "explanation of benefits" information mailed to an address that is different from the policy holder's.

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