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NEWS RELEASE

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State Budget Changes Move Forward as End of 2016 Session Nears

Budget bills will rebalance state finances, respond to emerging needs, invest in education and economic development

SALEM – Today the Oregon House of Representatives advanced the first in a series of budget bills that will rebalance the state's finances, respond to emerging needs, and make targeted investments in education and economic development.

Since the legislature adjourned the 2015 session last July, unforeseeable events such as the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, the tragic shooting at Umpqua Community College (UCC) in Roseburg, and the discovery of hazardous levels of air pollution in Portland have created new needs, and the legislature is taking action to respond:

- \$2 million will be set aside to support Harney County for police overtime and other costs associated with the 41-day occupation, while Oregon leaders continue to urge the federal government to offset some of these expenses.
- For UCC, the legislature approved approximately \$6.1 million for emergency assistance, security upgrades, and support to rebuild Snyder Hall, where the October 1, 2015 mass shooting occurred.
- In response to air quality concerns, \$2.5 million will help the Department of Environmental Quality improve oversight of industrial emissions and add more monitoring sites across the state.
- To address the worsening, statewide affordable housing crisis, the legislature is advancing \$10 million for emergency housing assistance to community agencies around the state, \$2.5 million for preservation of existing affordable housing units, \$2.73 million for foreclosure counseling, and additional support for Legal Aid services to help low-income Oregonians deal with housing-related issues.

Targeted investments in education programs and economic development will help build a strong future for the state:

- More than \$5.3 million will bolster Head Start Prekindergarten programs, and \$17.5 million will now be released to expand access to high-quality, mixed-delivery preschool programs.
- Students who enroll in community college through the state’s new “Oregon Promise” program, which allows Oregon high school graduates to attend community college for just \$50 a term, will benefit from a \$1.6 million investment to increase counseling and other support services aimed at improving academic success and graduation rates.
- The state will contribute \$7.5 million to support an innovative research and job training partnership led in part by Portland Community College that will aim to build a globally competitive future for manufacturing based in Oregon.
- Investments in key projects will generate economic activity and support growth in communities across the state, including:
 - \$3 million to help rebuild a critical dock in Warrenton and protect more than 100 local jobs after a 2013 fire destroyed the seafood processing facility and dock owned by Oregon-based Pacific Seafood, one of the largest employers on the northern coast;
 - \$2 million to repair Juntura Road in eastern Oregon, an important project for a local employer and its workers because the road provides access between the Eagle Picher processing facility in Malheur County and its diatomite mine in Harney County.
 - \$1 million to help restore the historic Holly Theatre in Medford, which is expected to create nearly 100 local jobs and become the largest indoor concert and community event space in southern Oregon once it is completed; and
 - \$500,000 to support a multi-use project in Cornelius that will include a public library, low-income senior housing, and YMCA programs to serve families in Washington County.

Other investments will improve public safety, including \$1.5 million to perform DNA tests on a backlog of sexual assault kits, \$1 million to help Oregon State Police process background checks on gun sales, and \$677,000 to create a special prosecutor for elder abuse cases. A \$30 million investment in the Oregon State Capitol building will focus on improving public safety and security, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and needed improvements to plumbing, mechanical, and electricity systems.

Finally, the state will maintain \$280 million in reserves to make sure the legislature is ready to respond to future needs or unexpected events.

The House passed HB 5201, HB 5202, and HB 5203 today, sending them to the Senate for final legislative approval. The remaining budget bills, SB 1596, SB 1597, SB 5701, SB 5702, are on the list for a Senate vote today and if passed will then head to the House for their final legislative vote.

The Oregon Constitution requires the legislature to finish its work in 35 days in even-numbered years, which means the 2016 session must adjourn by the end of Sunday, March 6 this year.

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