



from the desks of

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House Democrats Ignore The Pleas of Oregon Schools On Senate Bill 916A
Vote To Pass First In The Nation Unemployment For Striking Workers Law

Salem, Ore. – Today, House Democrats on the House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee passed [Senate Bill 916A](#) which would make Oregon the first state in the nation to allow public employees to receive unemployment benefits while on strike.

This vote comes after the House Speaker, Majority Leader, House Republican Leader, and all Members of the Oregon House of Representatives received [a letter](#) from the Superintendents of Oregon's largest school districts asking legislators to **oppose** [Senate Bill 916A](#).

The letter was signed by Superintendents from the following School Districts: Beaverton, Bend-La-Pine, Gresham-Barlow, Hillsboro, Medford, Portland, Salem-Keizer, and Tigard-Tualatin.

“We must share the serious financial strain and administrative burden this bill would place on school districts– especially during a time of profound fiscal uncertainty. The core of our concern is simple: every public dollar intended for education must be spent in a way that directly benefits students,” **said the Superintendents in their letter.**

Today's vote comes just days after Washington State passed legislation allowing striking workers to receive unemployment – with the major caveat that public employees are barred from striking, according to their state law. As a measure of good faith, House Republicans proposed the [-A15 Amendment](#) which would have aligned Oregon with Washington State in the following ways:

- **Added a two-week disqualification period, with a one week waiting period.**
 - As currently drafted, Senate Bill 916A only allows for a one-week disqualification, and a one-week waiting period.
- **Capped the number of weeks benefits could be received to 6 weeks.**
 - As currently drafted, striking workers in Oregon could receive up to 26-weeks of benefits, except during a recession or as the economy begins to recover from a recession - when workers are least likely to strike.
- **Ensured that the Oregon Employment Department would have to report back to the Legislature annually on the prevalence of strikes in the state and the cost of benefits for striking workers.**

- As currently drafted, there is no such required report. The Oregon Employment Department would *only* report back to the Legislature as requested.
- **Stated that the measure would only be effective until 2035 to examine its effectiveness.**
 - As currently drafted, there is no expiration date for the measure.

During the committee, House Republicans also made a motion to send [Senate Bill 916A](#) to the House Committee on Rules for further discussion. This motion was voted down along party lines.

“Oregon ranks 48th for business friendliness and 45th among all states for public school quality. I am disappointed that instead of addressing these harsh realities, the Majority Party has doubled down on another failed policy that will only hurt our cities, counties, schools, and private businesses,” **said Representative Lucetta Elmer (R-McMinnville).**

“Without a doubt, this legislation will hurt Oregon students. We should be listening to our School Administrators who steward our education dollars instead of [prioritizing political donors](#),” **said Representative Shelly Boshart Davis (R-Albany).**

“Either we are concerned about the well-being of our students, our lagging education results, and our chronic rates of absenteeism or we aren’t. It is hard for me to fathom that Democratic Legislators are willing to turn a blind eye to their very own Superintendents and our students – but here we are,” **said Representative Anna Scharf (R-Amity).**

House Republicans have served notice of a Minority Report.

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