



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

February 1, 2017

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Senate Democrats will fight for small businesses, education this session

Oregon Senate Majority Office releases agenda for 2017 Legislative Session

SALEM – Senate Democrats today released their plan for creating jobs, improving education and leveling the playing field for everyone.

“This session, Senate Democrats will fight for greater government transparency, continuing to grow Oregon’s economy – particularly by supporting small businesses – and ensuring we have the necessary policies in place to keep Oregonians healthy and safe,” Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) said. “We also remain resolute in our commitment to protect Oregon as a place where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Even in the face of the federal government’s current direction, Oregon is a place where we welcome people of all different walks of life, promoting values of inclusivity, equal opportunity and justice. It’s more important than ever that we remain committed to those values.”

The Oregon Senate Democratic Caucus 2017 Session Agenda focuses on four key areas:

- Supporting education and workforce training for Oregon’s next generation;
- Investing in Oregon: Strengthening working families and economic development statewide;
- Keeping Oregon healthy and safe; and
- Promoting smart, accountable, efficient government.

Legislators will balance the budget by making sure government is investing its resources wisely. Protecting investments in K-12 education, community colleges and university education will be

a top priority to build a strong future workforce. Statewide graduation rates have improved gradually in recent years, but there is much more work to do to improve that statistic. Senate Democrats will continue finding support for the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center, an innovative partnership between industry and education to provide cutting edge workforce training. OMIC creates jobs while simultaneously training the workforce to do those jobs.

Senate Democrats will work to continue the Oregon Promise program, providing low-cost community college for Oregon's students, and bolstering career and technical education pathways to help high school students get the training they need to earn good-paying jobs. Standing up for working families and fostering a strong state economy also is paramount. Caucus members will be working for a fair work week, ensuring the state's most vulnerable workers have access to paid family leave and expanding access to capital for small businesses.

To keep Oregonians healthy and safe, Senate Democrats will look for ways to continue ensuring as many Oregonians as possible have access to health care services they need, even after potential change or repeal of the federal Affordable Care Act.

"Our policies are working, as graduation rates are improving and Oregon's economy is one of the fastest growing in the nation," Burdick said. "That said, we still have a lot of work to do and we will be working hard to make sure our children have access to the education and resources they need for a brighter future. We also need to find ways to do this without turning our backs on our most vulnerable Oregonians, who rely on social safety net programs, or public employees who teach our kids, care for our seniors and keep our communities safe."

The complete 2017 agenda can be viewed online at https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senatedemocrats/Documents/2017_SenateDemocrats_Agenda.pdf.

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