



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate Democrats release 2016 Legislative Agenda

Priorities include economic growth, health, safety and accountability

SALEM – The Oregon Senate Democrats will focus on economic growth, fostering government accountability and keeping Oregon healthy and safe as key hallmarks of the legislative session. The plan for accomplishing these goals is outlined in the 2016 Legislative Agenda, released this morning at the State Capitol.

“We are ready to get to work accomplishing the things that matter to all Oregonians,” Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) said. “This session, Senate Democrats will fight for greater government transparency, continuing to grow Oregon’s economy – particularly small businesses – and ensuring we have the necessary policies in place to keep Oregonians healthy and safe.”

The agenda focuses on three key areas:

- Growing Oregon’s economy by investing in education, small businesses and our workforce across the state;
- Fostering government accountability and transparency; and
- Keeping Oregon healthy and safe.

Senate Democrats will work to give small businesses greater opportunity to grow and thrive. Senate Bill 1589 expands the eligibility criteria for small businesses to qualify for loans or grants from Business Oregon’s Credit Enhancement Fund. Eligibility expansion will have a positive

impact on Oregon businesses across the state by allowing more businesses – particularly those in rural Oregon – to access those funds for expansion, and for retaining and hiring employees.

A pair of bills to improve oversight for certain foster care providers is also in the works. Senate Bill 1515 tightens licensing and certification standards for certain child-care providers, strengthens the authority of the Department of Human Services to hold licensed providers accountable for outcomes and creates new protections for whistleblowers who report child safety issues. Senate Bill 1516 will ensure that this work continues beyond the short legislative session, through the efforts of a dedicated work group to further examine licensing and oversight in foster care. Together, these bills will create safer environments for foster children around the state.

Senate Democrats plan to boost government accountability and transparency by requiring disclosure of the names of individuals or organizations requesting bill amendments; and supporting greater transparency of lobbyist-client relationships. They also will be working to balance the budget by making sure government is investing its resources wisely.

Protecting investments in K-12, community college and university education also will be a top priority to help improve educational outcomes for our students and Oregon’s future workforce. The work done so far has helped to improve statewide graduation rates by 2 percent over 2015 results.

“The recent report showing a 74-percent annual graduation rate is strong evidence that our policies are working and our investments are paying off,” Burdick said. “We still have a lot of work to do on this issue and we will be working hard to make sure our children have access to the education and resources they need to be successful in the future. To do this, we will continue focusing on improving the high school graduation rate and helping more Oregonians move forward into achieving higher education.”

The complete Senate Democrats’ 2016 agenda can be viewed online at [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senatedemocrats/Documents/2016 SenateDemocrats Agenda.pdf](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senatedemocrats/Documents/2016_SenateDemocrats_Agenda.pdf).

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