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Senate Democrats report progress on 2016 Agenda

Democrats take steps to improve economy, health, safety and accountability

SALEM – After passing the mid-point of the allotted 35 days for the current Legislative Session, Oregon Senate Democrats have made some large strides on this session's goals. Senate Democrats set out to focus on three goals. Following are some results that they've accomplished so far this session (with the bill numbers included):

- ***Growing Oregon's economy by investing in education, small businesses and our workforce across the state***
 - **SB 1589:** Expanded eligibility criteria for small businesses to qualify for loans or grants from Business Oregon's Credit Enhancement Fund, allowing more businesses – particularly those in rural Oregon – to access capital for expansion and retaining and hiring employees;
 - **SB 1583:** Directed the Office of Small Business Assistance to act as a facilitator between small businesses and local governments, providing recommendations to improve local government transactions with small businesses;
 - **SB 1540:** Required the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to identify the best methods for drawing students toward pursuing mathematics related degrees in Oregon universities;
 - **SB 1544:** Increased the time an unemployed individual participating in an apprenticeship program is eligible for unemployment benefits during unpaid full-time classroom training to fulfill program requirements; and
 - **SB 1566:** Extended students' ability to attend schools in districts where they are not residents. This allows students to seek the opportunities and support

services they need to thrive when those same opportunities aren't available in their home school districts.

- ***Fostering government accountability and transparency***
 - **Senate Rules:** Required that disclosure of the names of individuals or organizations requesting bill amendments be recorded with those amendments; and
 - **SB 1562 and 1570:** Optimized the legislative schedule – including adding a legislative day prior to each even-year session – to improve efficiency of legislative business, give lawmakers a running start into their work each year and increase transparency for when bills will be heard in committees during the first week of each session.

- ***Keeping Oregon healthy and safe***
 - **SB 1514:** Allowed Oregon's Charitable Prescription Drug Program participants to repackage certain donated prescription drugs and transfer them to other programs for distribution to the Oregonians who depend on them most;
 - **SB 1503:** Required insurers to reimburse nurse practitioners and physician assistants at the same rate as physicians. This encourages qualified nurse practitioners and physician assistants to practice in communities throughout the state;
 - **SB 1558:** Protected a student's right to confidentiality by prohibiting disclosure of health, mental health and counseling records from campus-based health and counseling centers to other offices at a college or university;
 - **SB 1567:** Supported bipartisan legislation prohibiting impersonating an individual with intent to injure that person or deceive a third party to think they are communicating with the person who is being impersonated; and
 - **SB 1555:** Allowed law enforcement agencies the ability to conduct polygraph testing on employment applicants to supplement background checks for public safety officers.
 - **HB 4014:** Supported bipartisan cannabis legislation that establishes a youth marijuana-use prevention program pilot as well as guidelines of fledgling marijuana industry in Oregon.

"Oregon Senate Democrats have been working hard on the priorities that matter to all Oregonians," Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) said. "This session we have passed bills that will help grow Oregon's economy – particularly by helping small businesses access capital and providing greater opportunities for apprentice workers to gain the skills they need to gain middle class job security. We also have boosted health care access for all Oregonians, particularly those in disadvantaged communities and rural parts of the state. There is still much work to be done and about two more weeks to do it."

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