



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate Democrats show up to support schools

HB 3427 would provide stable, dedicated funding source for Oregon's classrooms

SALEM – For several years, Oregon has lagged near the bottom of the pack nationally for high-school graduation rates. The Oregon Senate Democrats showed up for work Tuesday to vote on a measure to reverse the downward spiral. But the Senate Republicans, instead, elected to deny the quorum necessary for the Senate to advance any legislation.

The Student Success Act – [House Bill 3427](#) – is designed to counter years of disinvestment in public education dating back to passage of Ballot Measure 5 and Ballot Measure 50 in the 1990s. The bill includes a transformational plan to provide students and schools the resources they need to be successful, as well as training to help teachers better serve students. It also includes a dedicated funding package to pay for those elements, which can be used only by schools.

“This is the culmination of 16 months of work, beginning with traveling across the state to hear what students, teachers, administrators, business leaders and community members have identified as priority educational needs,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay), who co-chaired the Joint Committee on Student Success which authored this legislation. “We listened to the people and, based on those conversations, we developed a plan of action. Every dollar that we collect will go into the classroom, and we have written that into the legislation by requiring that all funding goes to hiring teachers and staff and purchasing supplies to serve our students; not for covering PERS liabilities or any other costs.”

The bill is the product of more than a year of work. It started with a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators – the Joint Student Success Committee – touring the state, logging nearly 3,000

miles and visiting more than 55 different schools. The group visited with hundreds of students, teachers, school administrators, community members, business leaders and others to hear about what's working and what needs improvement. The group put together legislation based on what it heard in communities all over the state. When the day finally came that the Senate could vote on the landmark legislation, Republicans chose instead to be absent.

In addition to a dedicated funding source to be invested only in the classroom and programs that help students succeed, the bill includes several accountability measures, including regular reports to the Oregon Legislature and audits to ensure educational investments are yielding the best results for every dollar. The funding source is a Corporate Activity Tax that would be assessed only to Oregon's largest businesses. Of the state's 460,000 businesses, 420,000 would not pay a dime. The other 40,000 would pay a \$250 flat fee on the first \$1 million in revenue and 0.57 percent on each subsequent million in Oregon revenue, minus certain business expenses. Sales on groceries, fuel and medical products and services are exempt and won't be taxed under the plan. Oregon's individual taxpayers also would see a break on their taxes.

The legislation is written to prevent the new funding from going anywhere but into classroom programs and hiring teachers and support staff necessary to do the work. It will not be used to pay down any PERS liability. Concurrently, the Legislature is working on PERS reforms in the Capital Construction Committee to help bring down costs of the public employee pension system and save schools even more money.

Senate Democrats will return to the Senate Chamber at 2:30 p.m. today.

"When the people send you here to serve, I think you ought to show up for work," Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) said. "It costs the taxpayers about \$6,750 per day in Senator salary and per-diem costs, not including support staff and other expenses. When we don't have a quorum, none of the work we were sent here to do can get done, at a significant cost to Oregon's taxpayers. We came here to work for every Oregonian, and the Senate Democrats take their responsibilities not just as a duty, but as a privilege. We'll be here when the Republicans decide to come back to work."

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