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NEWS RELEASE

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SENATE APPROVES CUTS TO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, FIRST BUDGET CUTS FOR 2007-2009

SALEM –A disappropriation bill that cuts \$4.3 million, or about 25%, from the remainder of the legislative assembly’s 2007-2009 budget was passed off the Senate floor this morning.

Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Dave Hunt have frozen salaries for most legislative employees, eliminated out-of-state travel and overnight instate travel, and cut corners in the offices of the legislature’s fiscal and revenue offices, legislative counsel, legislative administration, and the legislature’s leadership offices.

“This tough budget situation calls for shared sacrifice all around,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin). “It is appropriate for the legislature to take the first step towards filling this \$855 million budget hole. While we’ve done our best to minimize the impact of cuts to Oregonians, a lot Oregonians will be feeling the pinch from our budget situation. The legislature will be no exception.”

Senate Democrats also announced today introduction of legislation that will reject recommendations by the Public Officials Compensation Commission to increase salaries for legislators in the upcoming biennium. Under current law, the legislature has to take some action to address the recommendations of the compensation commission.

“The Legislature needs to lead by example,” said Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn) “The commission did the job it was asked to do but salary increases are not an option while Oregonians are losing jobs, having their wages slashed, and being asked to work days for free.”

Next week the Senate is expected to vote on a package of budget cuts totaling over \$300 million. Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee have been working over the last month to identify cuts and seek out public input on how to best reconcile the budget hole that must be filled by June 30, 2009.

“Cutting our own budget is probably the easiest of budget votes we’ll have to make this session,” said Sen. Margaret Carter (D-Portland), co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee. “The votes that affect our children, seniors, and vulnerable Oregonians will be much more difficult. Taking care of 2007-2009 is our priority right now, but I’ll be glad to see us move on to addressing the next budget, where we face really frightening declines in resources.”

HB 5015 passed unanimously out of the House on February 12th. It will now move to the Governor's desk for approval.

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