



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Senate Leaders end session, cite job creation and protecting the middle class** *Senate Democratic caucus fulfills all priorities on their February agenda*

SALEM – Senate Leaders today called the February 2010 Supplemental Session a success, citing a list of budgetary and policy accomplishments which will create jobs and protect public schools and the middle class. Lawmakers convened the session February 1 and officially adjourned sine die at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, three days before the Legislature’s self-imposed deadline.

“This session, our second attempt at an annual session, has been tough. Things are tough everywhere, in every state. We showed that in Oregon when the going gets tough, the tough get going. We didn’t sit on our hands. We accomplished what we came here to do. We brought the state budget back into balance after a revenue forecast that was down and tackled important policy issues,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Woodburn/Gervais). “We met our internal deadlines and for the fourth straight session, the Legislature has kept its word to the Oregon people and adjourned ahead of schedule.”

Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin) pointed to the Senate Democratic Caucus’ follow through on the priorities they set for the February session.

“We came to the Capitol focused on helping Oregonians get back to work and looking out for them middle class,” said Devlin. “Our accomplishments reflect that commitment. From expanding job-creating programs to extending emergency unemployment to eliminating barriers to work, Senate Democrats delivered.”

Devlin said the February session illustrated why annual sessions are necessary. The Legislature addressed student assistance, rebalanced the budget, responded to immediate threats to the state’s agricultural industries, and took action on items that could not wait until the next regular session in 2011.

“Given the fast-paced nature of our world, we need to change the way we do business in Salem,” said Devlin. “The annual sessions bill we passed today will ask voters if the Legislature should be required to meet for annual, fixed-length sessions. This will allow us to be more responsive to Oregonians and exercise greater control over our budget, all within a fixed timeline that gives us the time to get the job done.”

The proposed Constitutional change will, for the first time, set absolute limits on the number of days the Legislature can meet,

In addition to accomplishing all of the goals laid out on their 2010 February Agenda, Senate Democrats made advances in areas of consumer protection, public safety, and protecting school funding. An abbreviated list includes:

**Access to Business Capital Act for Oregon Businesses**

Senate Bill 1017 gives small businesses better access to the capital they need through the Oregon Business Development Fund and the Oregon Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund. This will help create and expand small businesses across the state. *(Agenda item)*

**Building Opportunities for Oregon Small Business Today Fund**

House Bill 3698 creates the BOOST Fund to increase the availability of working capital to Oregon small businesses that create jobs and hire Oregonians to fill them.

**Helping Oregonians stay afloat**

House Bill 3655 provides an immediate six week extension in unemployment insurance benefits for out-of-work Oregonians. This will help nearly 19,000 Oregonians make ends meet while they search for employment while putting dollars into local communities. *(Agenda item)*

**Giving consumers rights against unscrupulous lenders and banks**

House Bill 3706 broadens the state's anti-fraud laws so that both private citizens and the Attorney General can sue lenders for misrepresentations, as they can do with most other businesses in Oregon. Consumer finance lenders, banks and trusts, credit unions, and mortgage lenders would no longer be exempt from legal action.

**Eliminating unreasonable barriers to employment**

Senate Bill 1045, the Job Applicant Fairness Act, will help Oregonians get back to work by allowing them to compete for jobs based on their qualifications, not their credit history. The bill will restrict job related credit checks, eliminating unreasonable barriers to employment for Oregon's jobseekers. *(Agenda item)*

**Increasing access to affordable health care**

Senate Bill 1003 gives small businesses and their employees increased access to affordable health insurance by modifying requirements for association health plans. Such plans are used by many general contractors and other small businesses to offer health care to their workers. *(Agenda item)*

**Ended resentencing hearings for violent criminals and sex offenders**

Senate Bill 1009 clarifies that violent criminals cannot be granted 10 percent additional earned time. The bill automatically suspends resentencing hearings, imposes a "time-out" on additional earned time, expands the list of ineligible crimes, and calls for an independent audit of the program so the Legislature can adjust accordingly next session.

**Protected funding for public schools**

The re-balanced state budget makes good on the Legislature's intent in 2009 to provide \$6 billion in funding for Oregon's public schools. This money provides certainty to school districts, allowing them to plan a full school year for Oregon's children.

**Approved construction projects creating hundreds of jobs**

Senate Bills 5563 and 5564 authorize bond sales to fund the \$65 million renovation of the Oregon Department of Transportation building on the Capitol Mall and \$75 million for a new 451-bed dormitory on the University of Oregon's East Campus. Combined the two projects will create approximately 600 jobs. *(Agenda item)*

**Oregon Opportunity Grants**

House Bill 5100 provides \$9.7 million in additional financial aid that will make a college education more

affordable in the current academic year and set aside another \$10 million for future enrollment growth. The grants are money paid directly to students to help offset the cost of a college education.

**Help with daycare for working parents**

House Bill 5100 includes \$12.8 million for Employment Related Day Care allowing parents of 5,500 Oregon children from 2,900 families to continue to work. ERDC assistance allows parents to keep their jobs and avoid having to choose between work or staying home to care for their children. Additionally, it protects the jobs of more than 1,500 daycare workers who care for 5,500 Oregon children from 2,900 Oregon families.

**Protected Oregon's Fruit Crop**

House Bill 5100 includes \$225,000 to battle a fruit fly infestation in Oregon's fruit industry. State experts estimate these fruit flies could damage 20 percent of the state's fruit crop and deal a severe blow to the state's agricultural economy.

**Increased funding for Public Safety**

House Bill 5100 includes the use of \$706,000 in dedicated funds for the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training to fund two additional 16-week basic training academies for law enforcement officers. This will expedite placement of police officers throughout Oregon communities and on state highways.

**Annual sessions**

SJR 41 asks the voters to decide whether the Legislature should be required to meet yearly and limits the regular session to 160 days in odd-numbered years and 35 days in even-numbered years. This change will modernize state government to make it more responsive to Oregonians' needs and increase financial accountability over the state budget. (*Agenda item*)

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*For more information on the Senate Majority Caucus, please visit [oregonsenatedemocrats.com](http://oregonsenatedemocrats.com)*