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Oregon State Legislature  
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## EDITORIAL:

### 'COOL SCHOOLS' FOR OREGON'S FUTURE

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*By Sen. Diane Rosenbaum, Sen. Chris Edwards, Rep. Jules Bailey and Rep. Jefferson Smith*

On a clear blue morning last May, John Kitzhaber convened a press conference to put forward a vision to create jobs in Oregon by fixing and upgrading schools across our state.

Touring DaVinci Middle School in Northeast Portland, Kitzhaber pointed out aging walls and obsolete boilers, delivering a challenge to Oregonians that we must make schools safer, healthier and more energy efficient, giving children a better place to learn, teachers a better place to teach and creating jobs in every community.

As legislators, we're answering that challenge.

We agree with the governor that far too many Oregon schools are old and energy inefficient. Upgrading them now means both new jobs and better schools for our children. It's a smart investment we're proud to encourage.

Our "Cool Schools" plan will finance energy-efficiency projects at public schools across the state, creating jobs for Oregonians in the hard-hit construction industry. Best of all, the plan is a bargain for taxpayers, reducing costs for school districts and allowing more dollars to go directly into our classrooms and fewer dollars to utility bills.

Studies show that healthy, high-performance schools mean healthy, high-performance kids. And it's no surprise that students learn better when they can attend school in a building that shows we value our children and their education. That's why we're making this a priority now.

Oregon needs jobs, we must reduce energy costs and our children deserve the best learning environment possible. Our economic future depends on it. Our proposal ties all of these priorities together.

The clean-economy jobs sector has been a bright spot for Oregon. Upgrading public schools would not only create immediate family-wage construction jobs, it also would foster local industries in Oregon's growing energy-efficiency sector that support and maintain these investments.

In Enterprise, the local district installed a high-efficiency boiler fueled by biomass. By sourcing fuel from the wood waste in surrounding forests, rather than dictators in the Middle East, the Enterprise School District made much more than a sound financial decision. It made an investment in the same rural communities that rely on the school district to educate their children.

As we continue working out the details of this legislation, we'll work closely with numerous stakeholders, school districts, members of both parties and both chambers, and the governor to ensure we deliver a bill that has broad support and gets the policy right for Oregonians. The final plan will be one that not only puts people to work this summer, but builds a solid foundation for statewide expansion that could mean an upgrade to every school in Oregon.

During this legislative session the global recession and our budget crisis will force us to make a lot of painful decisions. We also have an obligation to continue to invest in our children and their future, and to create living wage jobs for Oregonians. "Cool Schools" does just that. It means savings for school districts on their utility bills, allowing more money to go directly into our classrooms, all while providing jobs for struggling families. Governor Kitzhaber has delivered the vision on this proposal, and we look forward to delivering the legislation.

*Diane Rosenbaum, a Democrat representing Portland, is Oregon Senate majority leader. Chris Edwards, a Democrat, represents Eugene in the Oregon Senate. Jules Bailey and Jefferson Smith are Democrats representing Portland in the Oregon House of Representatives.*