



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate adds one billion dollars to schools budget by passing K-12 bill

SB 5519A marks a turning point for Oregon schools, reversing the trend of teacher layoffs and big class sizes

SALEM—Marking a turnaround from years of cuts, the Oregon Senate today voted to approve a \$6.75 billion budget for Oregon's schools for the 2013-2015 biennium. Senate Bill 5519A, which passed on a vote of 22-8, provides schools with one billion dollars more than the current appropriation.

“Today we deliver on Oregonians’ top priority by stabilizing our schools with a budget that reverses the trend of teacher layoffs and ballooning class sizes,” said Senator Alan Bates (D-Ashland). “To provide for this historic boost in resources for our schools, we had to make some difficult decisions. But Oregonians sent us here with a clear mission to reinvest in education, and we have made school funding our top priority.”

In recent years, school districts from Ashland to Beaverton to Corvallis have had to enact cuts to their budgets through a mix of shortening the length of the school year, laying off teachers, nixing elective programs and activities, and cramming students into larger classes. The school budget passed by the Senate today takes Oregon’s schools in the opposite direction with a substantial reinvestment in public education.

“We can be proud of our K-12 school budget. With today’s vote, we are rounding the turning point towards stronger schools,” said Senator Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee. “We’re bringing back opportunities for our students and fostering a better environment for achievement while delivering an overall budget that protects vital state services.”

While the Legislature does not have direct control over how these dollars are used by individual school districts, the amounts will allow the vast majority of schools to avoid cuts to staffing and programs. Some schools will be able to add back educators, school days, and valuable programs like music, art, and physical education.

“A better budget for schools means a brighter outlook for student achievement and a higher quality of classroom instruction,” said Senator Rod Monroe (D-Portland), co-chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education. “While this budget is not perfect and there’s more work to be done in the coming years, it is far and away our strongest schools budget in nearly a decade.”

The \$6.75 billion in school funding comes from a direct appropriation of \$6.55 billion and \$200 million in savings from the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) enacted in Senate Bill 822.

Senate Bill 5519A will now go to the Oregon House of Representatives for a vote.

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