



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate approves extraordinary funding package to secure stability for schools

Bipartisan votes on bills will also infuse senior programs, mental health services with millions in new funding

SALEM—In what amounts to a sea change in Oregon’s long-term investment in our schools, the Oregon Senate today gave final approval to a series of bills aimed at providing more direct resources and funding for education, senior programs, and other critical state services. The votes on the Senate floor today brought the 2013 Special Legislative Session to a close and delivered a huge victory to communities across Oregon.

“This is a momentous day for all of Oregon. Today we directed another \$100 million to K-12 schools, which will add more days to the academic year and shrink classroom sizes,” said Senator Rod Monroe (D-Portland). “Given that we added an additional \$1 billion to the school fund in the past session, the infusion of new funding in this special session is just extraordinary.”

School districts across Oregon say they expect to use the additional revenue to add more teachers and provide more instruction days during the school year. Additionally, the package will boost funding for universities and community colleges that will use these new resources to keep students’ tuition increases to a minimum.

The Senate approved 5 bills on Wednesday:

- Senate Bill 861, which makes further cuts to the cost-of-living adjustments received by PERS retirees;
- Senate Bill 862, which reforms certain policies related to PERS;
- Senate Bill 863, which forbids counties from adopting local ordinances relating to agriculture;
- House Bill 3601, which increases the corporate tax rate, modifies the personal exemption credit, reforms the senior medical deduction, and increases the cigarette tax while introducing lower tax rates for small and family-owned businesses;
- House Bill 5101, which appropriates about \$200 million to critical state services in the current budget cycle.

Each of the five bills passed with bipartisan support in the Senate. In September, legislative leaders and Governor John A. Kitzhaber agreed to move this package of bills through the three-day special session.

“Today’s special session will make a lasting, positive change to our state’s revenue system by making the senior medical deduction more accessible to lower-income Oregonians,” said Senator Ginny Burdick (D-Portland).

“We are also asking corporations and wealthier Oregonians to pay a little more to boost critical funding for schools and state services.”

In the current budget cycle, the revenue generated by the package will direct \$100 million to K-12 schools, \$40 million to universities and community colleges, \$41 million to senior programs, and \$20 million for mental health services. The bill also expands the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit from 6% to 8%, which provides meaningful assistance to working families trying to make ends meet.

The bipartisan votes in the Oregon Senate and House to boost funding today marked a stark contrast with the federal government, which entered its second day of shutdown because of partisan gamesmanship in Congress.

“I’m proud that both sides have given some ground in order to make this package into a reality for everyday Oregonians,” said Senator Lee Beyer (D-Springfield). “It will truly make a real difference for Oregon’s students and our most vulnerable.”

The bills now move to the desk of Governor John A. Kitzhaber, who has pledged to sign each of them.

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