



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

June 21, 2013

CONTACT: Tom Powers (503) 986-1074
tom.powers@state.or.us

Referral to voters aims to make college more affordable

SJR 1 asks voters to greatly expand Oregon Opportunity Grants to help more students reach higher education

SALEM—Today the Oregon Senate voted to refer a proposal to voters that would create a permanent fund to substantially boost financial aid for college and technical training programs. Senate Joint Resolution 1, which establishes the Oregon Student Opportunity Fund, passed by a vote of 20-10.

“The cost of a college education is rising rapidly, putting it out of reach for too many young Oregonians. And many students who are able to go to college will be saddled with larger debt loads,” said Senator Lee Beyer (D-Eugene), whose district includes the University of Oregon and Lane Community College. “We have the chance to make a substantial investment in our future by increasing financial assistance for aspiring students.”

Over the past decade, fees and tuition for institutions in the Oregon University System (OUS) have risen by 50 percent. Meanwhile, the amount of financial aid provided to students has declined, meaning students are taking out more debt for student loans than ever before.

To address this growing issue, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler has authored and championed the Oregon Opportunity Initiative, which would create a permanent and dedicated fund to finance additional aid to aspiring students.

“The Opportunity Initiative is a critical step toward increasing students’ access to higher education and technical training, which will help make Oregon more competitive in the new global economy,” said Wheeler.

Over time, the Oregon Student Opportunity Fund would provide funding to greatly expand Oregon Opportunity Grant awards, which gives tuition assistance to students attending an Oregon community college, university or private institution. Opportunity Grants also play a vital role in supporting students in vocational and technical training courses.

“Senate Democrats have made it a key priority to invest in Oregon’s future by increasing access to higher education and making it more affordable,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “The Opportunity Initiative will help put college and vocational programs in reach for more young Oregonians, leading to a highly-trained workforce that will benefit our economy.”

Senate Joint Resolution 1 now heads over to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration. If passed, voters would have the chance to approve the creation of the Oregon Student Opportunity Fund in November 2014.

###

For more information on the Senate Majority Caucus, please visit www.orsenatemajority.org