



OREGON SENATE REPUBLICANS

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Partisan Class Action Bill Passes in Oregon Senate

HB 2700 Lines Pockets of Trial Lawyers at the Expense of Oregon Schools

Salem, OR - Today, Senate Democrats passed a partisan bill lining the pockets of trial lawyers at the expense of Oregon schools. Despite admitting the bill needed "further review," Democrats insisted on fast-tracking HB 2700 through the legislative process without allowing a single amendment.

Senate Republicans introduced a minority report that would have aligned Oregon's class action rules with that of the federal government and a majority of other states while dedicating unclaimed awards from class action lawsuits to domestic violence and family law legal aid programs. It failed on a party-line vote.

"If Democrats were serious about class action reform, they wouldn't have designed a bill that changes the rules in the middle of the game," said Senator Jeff Kruse (R-Roseburg). "Not only does this bill create uncertainty in our legal system, it jeopardizes \$140 million in Lottery funds that would otherwise go to Oregon schools."

HB 2700 redefines a class as it relates to a class action lawsuit, requiring the suit to "generally describe" the members of the class and leading to the inclusion of large groups that don't legally have claim to any payout. This exponentially increases class action award amounts, increasing legal fees and lining the pockets of trial lawyers without helping a single victim. The bill also retroactively applies to any class actions that have not yet been given final judgment, allowing trial lawyers to take a larger payout from cases that have already been tried.

"One month into the session, there have already been clear winners and losers," explained Senator Chuck Thomsen (R-Hood River). "Democrat leaders have prioritized bills that benefit trial lawyers and anti-car activists at the expense of working Oregon families. It's time the legislature turns to the real work of creating jobs and increasing educational opportunities for all Oregonians."

Senate Republicans expressed concern that unclaimed funds from class action lawsuits

could be allocated to unspecified 'entities' for political purposes, including Political Action Committees. They noted that trial lawyers, the biggest beneficiaries of HB 2700, gave over \$300,000 to Democrat campaigns in Oregon this past election cycle.

"Democrats want to change the rules of the game as payback to trial lawyers, who spend large amounts to fund their election campaigns," said Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). "This is not the Oregon way."

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