

# Senate Republican Office

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## **K-12 budget should have been much more** *Lack of leadership on PERS reform leaves schools lacking*

**Salem, OR** – The Senate adopted a \$6.55 billion school budget on Wednesday, far short of what classrooms should have been sent this budget cycle. Republicans have been pushing for reforms to PERS that would make a \$7 billion budget possible.

“It is disappointing that after so many days invested in building a bi-partisan, consensus approach to reforming PERS, this legislature remains unable to put a bill on a chamber floor, and our classrooms are going to be the ones to suffer for the lack of leadership,” said Senator Larry George (R-Sherwood). “It comes down to the House Speaker who refuses to embrace the reality that a broken retirement system must be addressed.”

For many school districts across the state, this K-12 budget is a cuts budget, resulting in larger class sizes, shorter school years, and less class offerings. A coalition of school advocacy groups have called this funding level a “more cuts” budget.

“There is a giant hole in the K-12 budget, and it is called PERS,” said Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). “For all the additional money we are pouring into education with this budget, much of it won’t reach classrooms because it goes to pay run-away PERS rates. Lack of leadership on PERS reform is the reason many classrooms won’t see any relief over the next two years.”

A group of Republicans and Democrats have expressed a desire to do more for PERS reform. Democrat Senators and Representatives have consistently requested more substantial PERS reforms, but House leadership has refused to let any bills move through the process.

“Fixing PERS is still the right thing to do,” said Senator Tim Knopp (R-Bend). “Editorial boards know it, parents know it, police departments know it, college students know it. We could do so much more for K-12, community colleges and higher education and the most vulnerable among us. It would require the House Speaker to step up and allow a floor vote on meaningful PERS reform.”

Republicans have consistently demonstrated a willingness to work with Democrats, to compromise, and to find common ground.

“We believe there is still time to pass real reforms and give local classrooms more resources,” said Senator Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro). “The PERS Coalition plan would be a good place to start. Republicans are ready and willing to work on and vote for PERS reform, until the final gavel drops.”

The results of Oregon’s chronic underfunding of education are well documented. The *Oregonian* recently verified that Oregon has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest class sizes in the nation. Education Week has stated that Oregon is 46th for K-12 achievement. A survey by COSA confirms that Oregon per-pupil spending is 7% less than the national average.

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