

Senate Republican Office

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, S-323
Salem, Oregon 97301

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CONTACT: Michael Gay
(503) 986-1950
(503) 781-8559

Session mismanagement jeopardizes PERS reform *“Grand bargain” has mutated into “Grand Positioning”*

Salem, OR – As the 2013 legislative session drags on past its target end date without a clear path to adjournment, it is clear that mismanaged negotiations and blown opportunities are threatening serious and significant PERS reforms.

“For four months we were building towards an ‘Oregon moment,’ the chance for a benchmark agreement based on bi-partisanship and compromise,” said Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). “Democrats have adopted a go-it-alone strategy, and the result is too many tax increases, too little PERS reforms and no tax certainty for small businesses. The numerous opportunities to reach a bi-partisan agreement have been squandered.”

Republicans along with editorial boards and a sweeping coalition of education advocates, businesses, and local governments have maintained throughout session that PERS reform is the right thing to do, and one of the legislature’s most important priorities. At Democrat’s insistence, Republicans have reluctantly been willing to consider tax increases if necessary to secure a vote on significant PERS reforms.

But with \$2 billion more in revenue available over the next two years, Republicans have maintained that PERS reforms should stand on their own. In order to satisfy the Democrat’s consistent call for more revenue, Republicans offered to trade a tax reform for small businesses in exchange for targeted revenue proposals. Democrats have been unwilling to move the small business tax certainty despite numerous attempts at compromise.

“PERS reform is the right thing to do, and it should be passed on its own merits,” said Larry George (R-Sherwood). “Democrats want to call their tax increases and token reforms a ‘grand bargain,’ but it is nothing more than an attempt to position Republicans. Why do Democrats continue to insist on new revenue in order to do the right thing on PERS reform?”

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