



State Representative Kim Thatcher

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Legislative Update

September 2009

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Dear Friends,

Fall is in the air and school is back in session for tens of thousands of Oregon children. I thought it would be interesting to focus this update on recent legislative activity regarding education.

Our schools face many challenges. Funding is one of the biggest. The Legislature gave K-12 schools \$6 billion over the next two years. That's \$245 million less than the last budget cycle. Oregon's public university system received \$5.2 billion which was about the same as last time.

At the federal level, President Obama has offered to help our students succeed with \$4 billion dollars in the Race To the Top Program. However, this money is available to states that encourage innovation with things like charter schools. Oregon appears to be behind other states in that area, and legislative actions to curtail public online schools are not helping.

Recent state test scores show improvement. My legislative district includes the Salem-Keizer school district, the St. Paul school district and the Newberg School District. In Salem-Keizer elementary and middle schools scores were up in reading and math, but high school students remain at or slightly below the state averages. St. Paul schools also showed gains in a few areas. They can be very proud of the math scores for junior and high school students. However, elementary students have some catching up to do in reading. Newberg deserves special congratulations for meeting or exceeding state scores at just about every grade level in every subject.

As a member of the House Education Committee I look forward to working on good policy choices to help our school system. As a parent and citizen I hope you'll join me in helping all our children have a successful School Year.

Sincerely,

Kudos for Rep Thatcher

- Associated Oregon Industries ranked Rep Thatcher as one of the top 15 members of the House of Representatives for her 92% score in the 2009 Legislative Session.
- Freedomworks Oregon chapter awarded Rep Thatcher with a special "friend of the taxpayer" award at a recent town hall meeting in Keizer.
- Rep Thatcher was appointed to be the new Chair of the Taxpayer Caucus in the Oregon House by Americans for Tax Reform.



Record crowds recently attended town halls in St. Paul, Newberg & Keizer held by Rep Thatcher & Senator George

"Thank you both so much for the wonderful town hall. I feel so much more well-informed. It was like a light turned on!"

Mary Holtan, Newberg

New Education Laws Adopted by 2009 Legislature

---SCHOOL FUNDING---

K-12 School Funding--The Budget for schools is \$7 billion for the next 2 years. That's \$245 million less than the last budget cycle. Of that \$6 billion, \$200 million is in a special reserve account. (SB 5520 & SB 5554)

Head Start Funding--No cuts to this program which helps over 6,500 youngsters ages 3 and 4 prepare for success in school. (SB 5519)

Capital Construction Costs--Referred to the ballot a proposal to revise the Oregon Constitution to exempt schools from bond limitations under property tax laws and allow the state to sell bonds for local projects. (HJR 13)

Renovating & Expanding Schools--More than \$1 billion was allocated to fix years of deferred maintenance in public buildings including Oregon universities and community colleges, as well as critical seismic upgrades at the K-12 schools with the greatest need. (SB 5506)

---CURRICULUM---

Sex Education – Each school district is required to provide age appropriate, medically accurate, human sexuality courses as part of the health education curriculum. (HB 2509)

Health Education – A pilot program was created for six Head Start locations to implement a health literacy program for parents about common ailments and preventative care for their children. (SB 3041)

Full-Day Kindergarten – A law to allow schools to charge tuition for supplemental kindergarten was extended and steps were taken to provide tools for school districts to continue offering full-day kindergarten for Oregon school children. *(SB 44)*

Year round school pilot program – The Department of Education will set up a pilot program to encourage school districts to provide summer school and look at the merits of an extended school year. *(SB 484)*

Physical Education – Grants will be handed out by the Department of Education for to school districts so they can provide additional physical education instruction. *(HB 5054)*

Environmental Literacy – A plan will be created by a new taskforce to teach students about environmental issues facing Oregon and the U.S. The taskforce will encourage healthy lifestyles, promote outdoor experiences and teacher training. *(HB 2544)*

---QUALITY TEACHERS---

Fingerprinting Employees – Fingerprints are required of all public and private school employees or contractors on a school campus. Tougher licensing standards will be set for student teachers and teachers transferring from another jurisdiction. *(SB 46 & SB 47)*

Can't Pass The Trash – Secret agreements between abusive teachers and school districts will be prohibited. Training will be required on how to avoid, identify and report misconduct; and facilitate the transfer of information about substantiated allegations of misconduct during the new hire process. Workers at Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) now required to report child abuse. *(HB 2062 & HB 2063)*

License Revocation – Allows TSPC to revoke the license and permanently bar a teacher or administrator who is found guilty by a preponderance of evidence of rape, sodomy, sexual penetration, or sex abuse of a student in grade 12 or below. *(SB 48)*

New Penalties for Coaches – Enhanced penalties will occur in any case of sex abuse in the second degree if the offender is over 21 and is the coach of the victim. *(HB 2476)*

Professional Development – The Oregon Educator Professional Development Commission will be established to provide a “one stop shop” website to help improve teacher skills. *(SB 443)*

---BEYOND K-12---

10TH Grade Assessments – The Department of Education will test all students in grade 10 to predict success on college entrance exams and a waiver for the assessment will be allowed for eligible school districts. *(HB 2362 and SB 796)*

Financial Aid – The Oregon Opportunity Grant program will continue to help 36,000 students afford a college education.

Workforce Certificate – A new Career Readiness Certificate program has been created to help jobseekers demonstrate their skills to employers. It will help match workers with potential employers, .prepare Oregonians for the workforce with training, continuing education and career advancement in a skills-based economy. *(HB 2398)*

Career Pathway Programs – These will ensure community colleges and private vocational programs work together when colleges offer new career pathway programs to meet specific employment needs. *(HB 3117)*

Non-College Bound Students – A taskforce will look at partnerships among HB schools, community colleges, labor, business and industry related to career and technical education. *(HB 2732)*

College Tuition Waivers for Seniors – Each state institution of higher education must waive tuition for any course audited by an Oregon resident 65 years of age or older when classroom space is available. *(HB 2011)*

College Tuition Waivers for Survivors of Veterans -- Allows survivors of servicemen and servicewomen killed or who are 100 percent disabled in combat to apply for open seats in courses at Oregon's seven public universities and Oregon Health and Sciences University and take courses for free. *(SB 595)*

---SCHOOL CHOICE---

School Choice Restrictions – Enrollment growth in virtual public charter schools is capped at certain levels and a taskforce is set up to review other aspects of online education. *(SB 767)*

---MISC.---

Free School Breakfast for all low-income kids – The cost of school breakfast for all low-income kids will now be covered, including those currently paying a portion of the full price. *(HB 5054)*

School Sports Safety – School Districts now required to ensure coaches receive annual training on recognizing concussion symptoms and how to seek proper medical treatment. *(SB 348)*

School Nurses – The Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program was created and the terms of the loan repayment program for nurse educators was changed. In addition school districts are now required to ensure they have a specified ratio of nursing personnel to medically complex students, medically fragile students, and nursing-dependent students. *(SB 701 & HB 2693)*

Bullying – Schools are now required to include certain elements in their policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying and prohibiting cyber-bullying. *(HB 2599)*

Oregon **School for the Blind** – The Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to close Oregon School for the Blind and transition students to other programs. *(HB 2834)*

Thoughts for Thatcher:

What do you believe is the biggest problem facing education in Oregon today?

[Click here](#) to give Representative Thatcher your thoughts.

Thank you for your feedback.

