

House approves bills to rebalance 07-09 budget

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Legislation Means Vast Majority of Oregon Students Will Receive Full Year of Classes

SALEM, Ore. -- The Oregon House on Thursday passed two bills to rebalance the 2007-2009 budget that assures the vast majority of students will receive a full year of classes and that impacts to human services and public safety were minimized in the face of over \$800 million in declining state revenues.

The bills were passed on a bipartisan vote, 37-22, with four Republican House members joining 33 Democrats in passing SB 5552 and SB 581.

"I am pleased that in these difficult times, on a bill that makes tough cuts to state services, we were able to come together as legislators and find the answers that allow us to essentially close the book on the 2007-09 budget," said House Speaker Dave Hunt (D-Clackamas County). "We were able to keep schools open, provide essential services to vulnerable Oregonians and keep our communities safe, despite having to make these cuts. House members led by Ways and Means co-chair Peter Buckley (D-Ashland) did incredible work in protecting Oregon's essential needs."

Rep. Bob Jensen (R-Pendleton), who also voted for the bill, said the legislation, though difficult to approve,

was needed to move Oregon forward.

“The challenges we face with this global crisis demand that we make tough choices to balance the budget,” said Jenson. “This was an open process that allowed all legislators and the public to fully participate. The bills we passed today will protect essential services, but I do worry about our ability to sustain these services in the next biennium.”

Buckley, the co-chair of the Ways and Means Committee, said this incredibly difficult process will help prepare Oregon for more difficult choices in the 09-11 budget process.

“This is just the beginning of Oregon digging itself out of the national and global economic crisis that has forced states across the country to make deep budget cuts. Here in Oregon, we were able to keep the vast majority of Oregon students in classes for the rest of this year, protect public safety and ensure that the most vulnerable Oregonians will be protected,” said Buckley. “We will work on the next budget with the same care and attention as we try to fill a \$3 billion hole. It’s not going to be easy, but we’re going to make it through.”

These two bills, combined with cuts to the Legislative Assembly budget approved two weeks ago, means the 07-09 budget is in balance pending the May revenue forecast.

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