

Legislators announce bi-partisan K-12 construction agenda

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

House Democrats and Republicans this week announced a bipartisan agenda that aims to make the state a partner in helping local districts boost K-12 capital construction. Communities across Oregon have struggled to meet the demands created by unprecedented growth and development. As a result, schools are overcrowded, outdated and in desperate need of maintenance.

“It’s critical that we address the last piece of the education funding puzzle and that’s the bricks and mortar in our schools,” said State Treasurer Randall Edwards. “Our students need and deserve modern classrooms and that will improve their learning environments.”

The bipartisan plan includes double majority reform, allowing the state to issue general obligation bonds as matching funds for K-12 general obligation bonds, allowing the assessment of school fees on new construction, putting excess lottery dollars into a school capital construction account, permitting districts to build schools outside the urban growth boundary and exempting seniors from new property taxes to pay for schools.

“It’s long past time for the state to step in and do what it can to help local school districts provide adequate educational facilities for our kids,” said House Majority Leader Dave Hunt (D-Clackamas County). “We can’t build a world class education system for our children when the buildings are literally crumbling and classrooms are so crowded that there aren’t enough desks for every child.”

“I’ve been working in a bipartisan manner with Rep. Hunt and others on this important topic,” said Rep. Burley (R-Bend), whose Central Oregon Districts is among the fastest growing in the state. “I look forward to a package of tools providing districts with flexibility.”

The package of bills is now being considered before House committees.

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