

## Legislation expands Oregon prescription drug program

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

Governor signs SB 362 that allows all Oregonians to join the pooling program and save money on prescriptions

SALEM, Ore. — Thursday Governor Ted Kulongoski was joined by Senator Bill Morrisette, Representative Mitch Greenlick and other healthcare advocates to sign legislation (SB 362) to expand the Oregon Prescription Drug Program to include the private sector, labor unions and all underinsured Oregonians who lack full prescription drug coverage. “By pooling individuals’ buying power for prescriptions, we are working together to help thousands of Oregonians leverage better prices for their medicines and save hundreds of dollars a year,” said Governor Kulongoski. “Private employers and unions can now take advantage of the value pricing that this program has negotiated on behalf of its members.” The Oregon Prescription Drug Program was created in 2003 to help low-income uninsured Oregonians over the age of 54 afford the high cost of prescription drugs. Through the power of bulk purchasing for prescriptions and by pooling resources together, the state is able to negotiate lower prices for prescriptions than what individuals and businesses normally could negotiate. In November 2006 the program was expanded under Ballot Measure 44 to allow all Oregonians without prescription drug coverage to access the program. Since the passage of Ballot Measure 44, the number of Oregonians enrolled in the program has more than tripled to nearly 16,000 members. Oregonians enrolled in the program can save on average 28 dollars per prescription and savings can be as high as 60 percent over retail prices. “This is an important step for the business community, employers and employees who are hurt by the high costs of medicine,” the Governor continued. “This legislation provides much needed prescription drug discounts to thousands of Oregonians and also allows employers to benefit from better prices than what they could negotiate on their own.” One of Governor Kulongoski’s top priorities this legislative session is to extend access to affordable, quality health care to all children in Oregon. “Today marks another important victory to achieving the dream that all Oregonians have health care and access to affordable prescriptions,” said Governor Kulongoski. “We just moved one step closer to that goal.”

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