State reps deflate school administrators â€˜golden parachutesâ€™

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Bill to end cushy retirement packages will put more money in schools

SALEM, Ore. â€” House representatives on Thursday put an end to a practice dubbed the â€œgolden parachute,â€• which has allowed school administrators in recent years to receive outrageous compensation packages upon completion of employment with Oregon school districts.

â€œThis bill will improve spending transparency in Oregon schools so that administrators canâ€™t get cushy retirement deals without taxpayers having a say in the matter,â€• said State Representative Betty Komp (D-Woodburn), a former school principal who made the Democratsâ€™ case for the bill on the House floor.

Senate Bill 384 will go into effect immediately upon receiving the Governorâ€™s signature and will prohibit school districts, education service districts, and public charter schools from entering into contracts with administrators providing compensation for work not performed. The bill also prohibits an administrator after contract termination from purchasing district property or using district property differently than another member of the public.

Komp said the bill is needed because of reports that fiscal abuse that surfaced in 2005 indicating that one Oregon administrator received $267,900 and three years of paid health insurance upon completion of employment. Another report indicated that a departing superintendent was able to purchase a luxury car valued at $26,665 for $7,900.

â€œThis kind of abuse of the system is inappropriate under any circumstances,â€• said State Representative Chris Edwards (D-Eugene). â€œBut when our public schools and our childrenâ€™s education have for years suffered cut after cut, itâ€™s downright disgusting. This bill takes taxpayer money and puts it into the classroom where it belongs.â€•

Democrats say the public reaction to the stories of extra compensation has had a negative impact on the image of government at every level and reduced support for public schools and public school districts in communities across the stateâ€”particularly when they are seeking increased school funding.

â€œUltimately, these kind of measures are crucial to rebuilding trust that Oregonians have in our schools and our state legislature,â€• said State Representative David Edwards (D-Hillsboro). â€œThis trust is crucial if we are to meet our goal of building a world-class education system in Oregon.â€•

The bill now awaits signature by Governor Ted Kulongoski.

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