

House approves landmark education budget

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon House of Representatives today unanimously approved a K-12 education budget that designates \$6.245 billion for public education in the next biennium. Funding for public education in the 2007-09 biennium will increase by 18 percent over 2005-07 levels with the budget approved by the House today.

“This is a budget we can all be proud of,” said House Speaker Jeff Merkley (D-Portland). “This year Oregon kids won’t have to worry about their schools closing early or their favorite classes being cut in order to save money.”

House leadership pledged to increase funding this session after education budgets in recent years left some schools across the state without enough money to keep their doors open for a full school year. The education budget restores funding that was cut after the state economy slid into a recession in the early part of this decade.

In addition to closing their doors early, Oregon schools have been forced to delay repairs and needed expansion over the last decade. The education budget approved today puts more money toward those needed capital construction projects.

“In recent years, we have passed budgets that have increased the student-teacher ratio, cut school days, reduced class offerings and really short-changed Oregon students, their families and the state’s wellbeing,” said Rep. Larry Galizio (D-Tigard), chair of the Ways and Means Education Subcommittee. “In contrast, this budget reverses that direction, and it moves us toward lower class sizes, a full school year, and it restores essential programs to our public schools to the benefit of Oregon’s kids.”

Schools districts can refine their budgets for the next academic year now that the budget has passed the House. Since the 1997 session, no K-12 budget has been approved by a chamber of the legislature before July. Early consideration of this budget allows schools to plan for the upcoming academic year instead of worrying whether they will have enough money to adequately educate their students.

The K-12 education budget is contained in three separate bills: HB 5019, HB 5020 and HB 5021, and all three bills passed the House unanimously.

The budget bills will now proceed to the Senate for consideration.

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