

Oregon PTA onevoice May 2009

Deep cuts to school funding and state services under consideration

Laid off teachers, cuts to programs and lost days

The legislature is more than halfway through their session with the goal of going home by June 30. Major work needs to be done to meet that deadline, like passing a budget for schools and critical state services. The Ways and Means Committee is in charge of writing the legislative budget and they have been busy with a “road show”, a series of public hearings on the budget and proposed cuts.

State revenue pays primarily for *education, human services and public safety* with a small amount dedicated to other state services. Due to our heavy reliance on income tax and the economic crisis, Oregon tax revenue has dropped sharply. The expected budget hole is going to be \$4.4 billion short of the revenue needed to provide current services. This means thousands of laid off teachers and staff and lost days of school as well as deep cuts to human services and public safety.

The legislature is waiting to hear the revenue forecast on May 15 before deciding what the budget will be for 2009-11. The current plan calls for a combination of options but the most likely approach is the hybrid of cuts, spending savings and federal stimulus dollars and raising new revenue. Your input could make the difference between elimination of critical services or a budget which allows us to rebuild after the current crisis is over.

We need bold steps from our state leaders in order to deal with this once-in-a-lifetime crisis and preserve education, healthcare, and the human services that our children depend on.

- We can't balance the budget on the backs of working and middle-class families. It is **unfair and irresponsible to further punish the people who have been hit hardest by the economic crisis**—seniors, children, the unemployed, and low-income families—by cutting the services they depend on.
- We need a **balanced solution** that protects the vulnerable and doesn't shift the burden to the middle class.
- Cuts to healthcare, education, and public safety **only cost us more in the long term**. This is a short-term crisis—we need to avoid cuts to vital services that hurt **the long-term health of our families and our communities**.
- Oregon can no longer afford for two-thirds of corporations doing business here to pay the \$10 minimum income tax. Profitable corporations and the wealthy **need to carry their share of the burden** through these tough times.

- With a 12.1% and growing unemployment rate, Oregon families **can't afford more layoffs**.

- School districts are some of the largest employers in smaller, rural communities. Providing jobs and good wages for school employees may make the difference whether local businesses succeed or fail.

Contact your legislators, your constituent voice makes a difference

Log on to the Oregon PTA capwiz program to find your legislators and to make contact <http://capwiz.com/npta2/or/home/> enter your address and zip code and look for contact information for every legislator or use the capwiz contact boxes

- List your priorities (schools, services to children and vulnerable Oregonians)
- Tell them what is happening in your community (laid off teachers and staff? Plans to cut programs or school days?)
- Tell your elected official you need them to find a way to protect schools and services and meet their promise to be education supporters
- Use the language listed above to guide your personal message, shared commitment and wise use of our federal stimulus money and rainy day or education stability dollars will soften the landing for our children and state

Submit your written testimony to Ways and Means Committee

For those of you who would like to submit written testimony on the propose budget cuts to the Ways and Means Committee, you can send your testimony to:

gina.rumbaugh@state.or.us

Learn more about the budget

www.Oregonbudget.gov is the legislative page with in depth information about the state budget and process of creating the 2009-11 budget.