

Oregon offers \$2 billion for schools

By Sarah Zimmerman
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Oregon legislative leaders laid out their plan to raise billions in dollars in revenue for schools, as teachers are readying themselves for a walkout to protest a chronic disinvestment in the state education system.

Co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Student Success said Thursday, April 4, they'll be able to raise approximately \$2 billion in extra revenue each biennium to fund school initiatives focused on early education, increased class time and addressing mental and behavioral health issues in the classroom.

Educators praised the plan, but didn't say if it was enough to put an end to a planned teacher walkout in May. The Oregon Education Association, the state's largest teachers union, said they are monitoring the outcome of the legislature's revenue proposal.

"Oregon schools are in crisis," said John Larson, president of the Oregon Education Association in a statement. "If the legislature is able to fully fund their Student Success Act, we could make game-changing investments in all students, including students of color, low-income students, and students from other historically disadvantaged backgrounds."

The money will come from a new commercial activity tax, which takes a portion of a business' total revenue. Legislators are still working out the final details, but Rep. Greg Smith, a Republican from Heppner, said the tax is meant to be "spread very thinly across all businesses," with exemptions or smaller fines for small businesses.

The \$2 billion in expected revenue will go to a newly created "Student Success Fund," which will fund additional educational programs and other school initiatives including smaller class sizes and more counseling services.

At least 20 percent of the Student Success Fund money

will be invested into early education, including special education and the state's pre-school programs. Another 30 percent will be earmarked for statewide initiatives, including universal free meals and bullying prevention measures.

The rest of the money — approximately \$1 billion every two years — will go directly to schools to be used to improve educational outcomes in a state that suffers from one of the lowest graduation rates in the country.

To access that money, schools will have to submit proposals on how they will use the funds. The plans must address mental and behavioral health needs, and work to reduce educational barriers for students of color and other underserved students.

Educators have said that a lack of funding has forced schools to cut programs, expand class sizes and lay off staff. Schools have also reported not being able to afford enough counselors or other resources to address their students' complex mental health needs, a problem that has only gotten worse over the past decade.

Teachers have reported an increase in violent behavior from students, and a survey of 2,000 Oregon teachers found that 56 percent of educators have evacuated their classrooms at least once in the past year because a student was considered a threat to others.

"Education is almost the last thing that our schools are doing because they have kids who come in who are food insecure, who are housing insecure, who are dealing with untreated mental and behavioral issues," said Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, a Democrat from Portland and one of the co-chairs of the student success committee. "Schools have become the de facto provider for all these services, yet we aren't funding them."

The state will monitor how effectively schools are using the money and whether districts are meeting their

performance goals. Struggling schools will be given more resources and technical assistance to boost student success.

"We're very supportive of this plan," said Jim Green, executive director of the Oregon School Board Association. "We have underfunded our education system for 30 years and this is a great attempt at trying to address that."

Gov. Kate Brown expressed disappointment that the plan didn't include extra money for higher education, including community colleges and universities. She told reporters that higher education is essential for the state's plan to provide quality education from "cradle to career."




HAPPY HOUR
MON-FRI 4-7pm

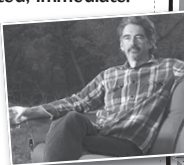
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Sisters Movie House The Emperor's Club 6:45 to 9 p.m. Part of the Creativity, Culture and Faith Series. For information call Sisters Community Church at 541-549-1201.

Sisters Saloon Poker Night 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! \$20. For information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

Paulina Springs Books Community Game Night 6 p.m. Second Wednesday of every month. For information call 541-549-0866.

MAY 9 THUR

Sisters Fire Hall Author Presentation with Bill Sullivan 7 p.m. "New Hikes in the Central OR Cascades." For more info call 541-549-0866 or go to paulinasprings.com.

Cork Cellars Tasty Thursday Hosted Wine Tasting 5 to 7 p.m. For additional information call 541-549-2675 or go online to corkcellarswinebistro.com.

Sisters Saloon Karaoke Night 9 p.m. to midnight. Every Thursday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

MAY 10 FRI

Hardtails Bar & Grill DJK9 Rawkstar Karaoke Night! 9 p.m. Every Friday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 11 SAT

Ponderosa Forge My Own Two Hands Art Auction & Party 5:30 p.m. dinner with music by The Sugar Beets. For tickets and info call 541-588-7063

Hardtails Bar & Grill DJK9 Rawkstar Karaoke Night! 9 p.m. Every Saturday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 13 MON

Hardtails Bar & Grill Open Mic & Jam Night 7 p.m. Every Monday, no cover! For information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 14 TUES

Fika Sisters Coffeehouse Pine Meadow Ranch Creative Round-Up 3 p.m. Artists Bean Gilsdorf and Diane Jacobs will present current works in progress and answer questions. Call 541-588-0311 for information.

Sisters Saloon Trivia Night 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sign-up is at 6:15 p.m. Free, every Tuesday! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

MAY 15 WED

Sisters Saloon Poker Night 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! \$20. For information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

MAY 16 THUR

Cork Cellars Tasty Thursday Hosted Wine Tasting 5 to 7 p.m. For additional information call 541-549-2675 or go online to corkcellarswinebistro.com.

Sisters Saloon Karaoke Night 9 p.m. to midnight. Every Thursday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

MAY 17 FRI

The Belfry Live Music with Slaid Cleaves 8 p.m. For tickets call 541-815-9122 or go to BelfryEvents.com.

Hardtails Bar & Grill DJK9 Rawkstar Karaoke Night! 9 p.m. Every Friday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 18 SAT

Cork Cellars Live Music with Mark Conklin 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. No cover! For information call 541-549-2675 or go online to corkcellarswinebistro.com.

Hardtails Bar & Grill DJK9 Rawkstar Karaoke Night! 9 p.m. Every Saturday, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 20 MON

Hardtails Bar & Grill Open Mic & Jam Night 7 p.m. Every Monday, no cover! For information call 541-549-6114 or go to hardtailsoregon.com.

MAY 21 TUES

Sisters Saloon Trivia Night 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sign-up is at 6:15 p.m. Free, every Tuesday! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersssaloon.net.

Events Calendar listings are free to advertisers. Submit items by 5 p.m. Fridays to lisa@nuggetnews.com



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