

# House approves tax on business to fund schools

By Sarah Zimmerman  
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Oregon lawmakers in the House on Wednesday, May 1, approved an extra \$2 billion investment for the state’s struggling school system, which suffers from some of the highest class sizes and lowest graduation rates in the nation.

After more than five hours of floor debate, the chamber voted 37-21 on the package, which would raise \$1 billion per year through a half a percent tax on some of the state’s wealthiest businesses. The money would be used to fund school initiatives focused on boosting test scores, increasing class time and expanding mental and behavioral health services.

It’s shaping up to be a major win for Democrats who were able to use their supermajority to wrangle a three-fifths vote for one of their major priorities this session. The tax package now goes to the Senate. But even if it is approved through the legislative process, it’s possible that opponents will move to put the issue to the ballot.

“We have endured two generations of children that have experienced education far below than what they deserve,” said Rep. Nancy Nathanson, a Democrat from Eugene who is one of the co-sponsors of the measure. “We can’t delay anymore.”

Republicans took issue with the modified commercial activities tax lawmakers are proposing to fund the program. The package calls for a .057% tax on gross receipts for businesses with \$1 million or more in sales, which make up less than 10% of all businesses in the state.

Opponents said the tax will cause price hikes on consumer goods and doesn’t exempt enough agricultural operations. They also said lawmakers first need to address Oregon’s unfunded public pension liability before putting money into the education system.

“Businesses are going to close,” said Rep. Kim Wallen, a Republican from Medford. “Pitting businesses against schools just isn’t the way we do things in Oregon.”

The vote came exactly one week before thousands of teachers across the state will protest during a day of action to bring attention to the condition of Oregon’s public schools, which

educators said has reached a breaking point.

The Oregon Education Association, the state’s largest teacher’s union, said schools have been underfunded for the past 30 years, causing class sizes to swell. The state has some of the largest class sizes in the country, as well as the nation’s shortest school year and lowest graduation rate.

John Larson, the Oregon Education Association’s executive director, said the funding problem has gotten so bad that many schools have been forced to cut P.E. and other extracurriculars.

Other schools, he said, no longer have full-time librarians, counselors or nurses. He notes one rural school in eastern Oregon where students only have access to the library 30 minutes a day and use band equipment that’s over 30 years old out of a lack of funding.

“Educators have done a really great job in keeping up the facade that schools are able to do more with less without impacting the quality of education,” said Larson. “We are to a point now that we can’t do that anymore.”

Lawmakers toured the state since last January, meeting with teachers and students to craft a funding package that addresses some of the biggest issues facing the education system while also allowing districts the flexibility to tie spending to the needs of individual public schools.

Half of the expected revenue will go to statewide educational initiatives and early learning programs, including more funding for preschools and special education.

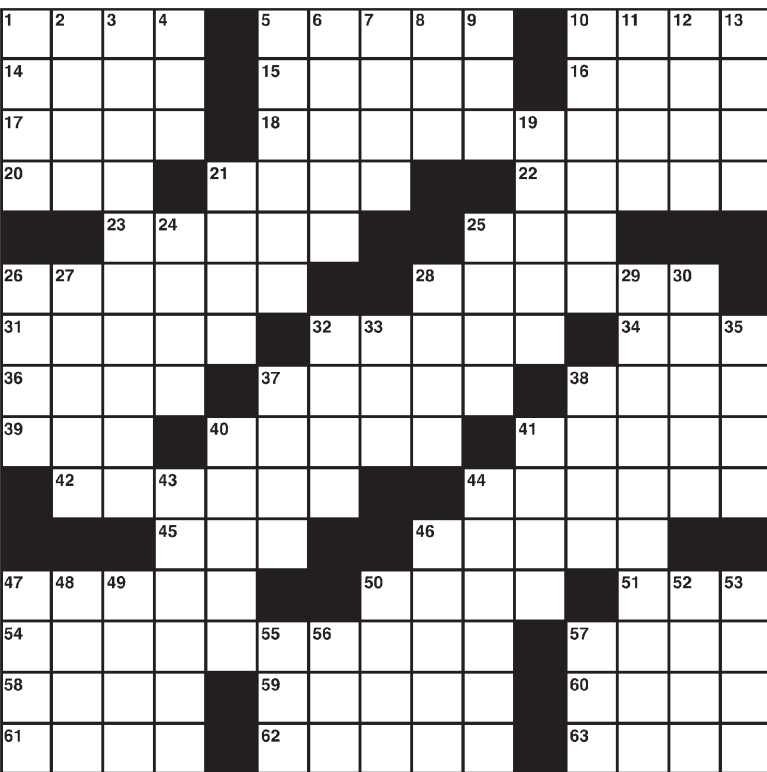
The rest of the money — approximately \$1 billion every two years — will go directly to school districts, who must submit plans to the legislature on how they will use the funds to boost educational performance, support diversity and expand mental and behavioral health programs. Schools with high poverty levels will receive more money, and all districts will have to prove that student outcomes are actually improving.

“We are finally going to do the things we need to do to get our school system back on track,” said Rep. Rob Nosse, a Democrat from Portland. “We are going to create a new, stable source of funding so that the next generation will have the tools they need to succeed.”

# The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Thrilled
  - 5 Island nation near Sicily
  - 10 “Get lost!”
  - 14 Frontal \_\_\_\_; part of the brain
  - 15 Just right
  - 16 Explorer Marco
  - 17 Flows back
  - 18 Writer’s submission
  - 20 And not
  - 21 Cold sore sites
  - 22 Wash off shampoo
  - 23 Royal decree
  - 25 Nickname for Margaret
  - 26 Shanties
  - 28 Rest period
  - 31 Bring together
  - 32 Place for rouge
  - 34 Laundry soap
  - 36 Beef or pork
  - 37 Clip wool
  - 38 Suffix for lament or laugh
  - 39 Cauldron
  - 40 Displeased look
  - 41 Soviet labor camp
  - 42 Guy
  - 44 Walks leisurely
  - 45 Cereal bit
  - 46 Football kicks
  - 47 Discarded remnant
  - 50 On the \_\_\_\_; increasing
  - 51 Vitality
  - 54 Downtown thoroughfare
  - 57 Lion’s cry
  - 58 At \_\_\_\_; instantly
  - 59 Small weight
  - 60 Israeli dance
  - 61 Equipment
  - 62 Word of welcome
  - 63 “I \_\_\_\_ Have Eyes for You”
- DOWN**
- 1 Singer Campbell
  - 2 Gray wolf
  - 3 Shorten
  - 4 \_\_\_\_ Moines
  - 5 Copycats
  - 6 Alter to make fit
  - 7 Camera’s eye
  - 8 Plato’s “T”
  - 9 Capone & others
  - 10 Bits of parsley
  - 11 Quarter, for one
  - 12 “Heidi” setting
  - 13 Carry
  - 19 Stream
  - 21 Mrs. Herman Munster
  - 24 Skillful
  - 25 Wharf
  - 26 Camel’s feature
  - 27 \_\_\_\_ these days; eventually
  - 28 Marine mammal
  - 29 Recipe amount
  - 30 Ease, as another’s fears
  - 32 Food, slangily
  - 33 Chop down
  - 35 Table supports
  - 37 Aberdeen native
  - 38 Vienna’s nation: abbr.
  - 40 Swats
  - 41 Long \_\_\_\_; absent for quite awhile



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

5/8/19

## — Last Week’s Puzzle Solved —



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5/2/19

- 43 Car to use temporarily
- 44 Pass \_\_\_\_; be accepted
- 46 Bit of a jigsaw puzzle
- 47 Air pollution
- 48 Candy \_\_\_\_; Yuletide sweet
- 49 Costa \_\_\_\_
- 50 Monthly expense
- 52 James \_\_\_\_ Jones
- 53 Pastor’s advice
- 55 \_\_\_\_ the line; obey
- 56 \_\_\_\_ into; meet unexpectedly
- 57 Fraternity letter

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