

# Measure 5 fallout to dominate Senate agenda

By Joe Kidd  
Emerald Politics Editor

When asked what he'll be doing in the state Senate this year, Grattan Kerans begins with sarcasm-coated predictions: "We are going to cut everything across the board ... We're going to raise tuition and give you fewer educational choices."

The reasons behind such a pessimistic forecast? Measure 5 and a looming \$800 million budget shortfall — all of which will add up to a long, tense round of budget hashing in the legislative session which begins next week.

And Kerans and one other Eugene-area senator have been thrown into the thick of it.

Kerans, who represents Dist. 20, and Sen. Larry Hill from Dist. 21, were appointed Thursday to the Senate's budget-crafting Ways and Means Committee by Senate President John Kitzhaber.

"Measure 5 will dominate the entire legislative session," Hill said. "And in addition we will have the recession to deal with. The two will work together to force the state to reduce the level of services by 10 to 15 percent."

And both senators say higher education will inevitably share some of that burden, likely facing budget cuts and tuition increases.

"Higher education has many friends in the Legislature, but that doesn't mean it will get off scot-free," Hill said.

Kerans, a Democratic legislator since 1974 who served on the senate Ways and Means Committee in 1987, said Oregon's colleges and universities "can't be insulated from the cuts" caused by Measure 5 and bleak economic forecasts.

Measure 5, passed in the Nov. 6 election, establishes a 1.5 percent property tax limit, shifting most of the responsibility of funding public schools from local tax systems to the state government. The measure requires the state to make up the dollars that would have locally gone to public schools, with that tab estimated at \$633 million in 1991-92.

Moreover, souring economic forecasts have lowered the amount of tax dollars anticipated to come into state coffers during the next biennium.

Those factors combine to create an estimated budget gap of nearly \$800 million over the next two years.

Budget cuts for all state-funded agencies have become the anticipated result. The question that has emerged: How much is cut from whom?

"It will be tough," Kerans, 49, said. For higher education, "I think we're obviously looking at tuition increases. It's either that, or eliminating whole bunches of students."

Hill, a two-term Democrat in the Senate who has also served two terms in the House, believes tuition increases "will certainly be discussed. The question is what will that do to people of lower income?"

Hill, who worked on the eight-member Ways and Means Committee in the last biennium, says that if the cost to attend Oregon's colleges and universities is increased, student loan programs will also be expanded.

As for faculty salaries, Hill, 40, said Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's proposed \$50 million increase is "out of the picture," but that some addition dollars will probably be funneled in that direction, despite cuts in other areas.



Grattan Kerans



Peg Jolin



Larry Hill

"I think there is a strong feeling in both parties that faculty salaries have been too low for too long," he said. "We're teetering at the edge of the cliff."

"I think we can get some

more dollars for faculty salary improvement, but it will be nowhere near the proposed \$50 million increase. But it will be some kind of recognition of the problem."

"In the past, higher education was used as a scapegoat, but not in this case now," Hill said. "We will try to minimize

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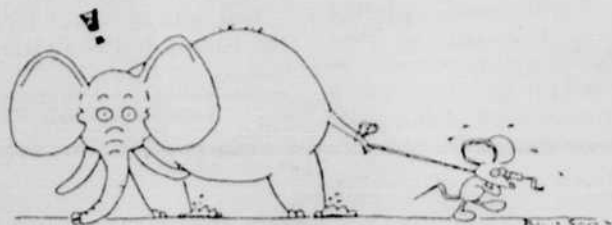
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