

Keyboard lock-up



Students pack the EMU computing center on Monday. Even though there are many computers in the center, during dead week the wait can be extremely long. If you have papers to type this week, it would be a good idea to show up early.

MATHEW STIFFLER/Emerald

Freeze: Tuition has increased 80 percent in six years

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director for the Oregon Student Association.

During each budget cycle, the Oregon Legislature predicts what the tax revenue from the upcoming two-year period will be, Remy said. When the actual tax revenue exceeds this estimate by 2 percent, the surplus is returned to tax payers according to methods determined by state law.

Kitzhaber's plan, however, is to use this "kicker" revenue to offset the anticipated \$459 million loss to school funding caused by the passage of Measure 47 in November. This use of the kicker revenue would require the Legislature to suspend the law related to refunds.

"We have a challenge to meet in Measure 47, and I have proposed a budget, which, through the use of the state's increased revenues, will be able to meet that challenge as it relates to schools," he said. "But this budget must also reverse the trend of disinvestment in our state."

Kitzhaber said the state has been disinvesting in itself over the past six years, resulting in educational problems such as higher tuition and larger class sizes.

Since 1990, tuition has increased at Oregon State System of Higher Education schools by 80 percent. Remy said the governor's plan puts students in a good position for the beginning of the legislative session. However, because the governor supports a tuition freeze for resident undergraduates, there is no guarantee they will get one.

"Who knows how it will come out," he said.

ASUO President Matthew Scotten said the next step is to get the Legislature to buy into the idea, and students need to play a big role in this.

"If students are active and voice their opinions — that's going to be the biggest factor," he said.

Along with the tuition freeze, Kitzhaber's plan also includes measures to make students eligible for the Oregon Health Plan.

During the last budget cycle, the Legislature opted to make students ineligible for the program under the rationale that they were already covered via parents' policies, Remy said. This rationale was incorrect, he said.

"Currently, we're the only group of people rejected regardless of finances," he said.

Aside from including a freeze in resident undergraduate tuition at OSSHE schools, Kitzhaber's \$27 million plan to invest in higher education also includes expansions in areas of technology and food processing and provisions for need grants for low-income students and families.

Whether resident undergraduates will actually see these proposals become reality remains to be seen, however. Legislators will begin to look at Kitzhaber's budget proposal at the beginning of the next legislative session in January. The legislature will then develop their own version of the budget, which they will submit to Kitzhaber sometime around June.

Kitzhaber, a Democrat, appears certain to run into heavy resistance when the Republican-controlled Legislature convenes on Jan. 13.

"This is where the real struggle is going to take place," the governor said at a news conference on Monday.

Senate President-Elect Brady Adams, who is a banker by trade, said Kitzhaber's plan to use the kicker revenue is a breach of legal trust.

"I have a high degree of respect for other people's money. Government should not be in the business of confiscating funds that are not ours to use," Adams said. "By tying education funding to the kicker, the governor is essentially holding Oregon's school children hostage."

The proposed 1997-99 budget, swelled by income tax revenue from a booming economy, is about \$1 billion more than the 1995-97 budget.

Lawmakers face financial problem because of property tax cuts

MEASURE: People differ on whether the law will affect the legislature's ability to raise state funds

By Charles E. Beggs
The Associated Press

SALEM — The 1997 Oregon Legislature, facing a financial predicament because of the Measure 47 property tax cuts, also will have to cope with a new restriction on its ability to raise money.

The restraint is more or less self-inflicted. Voters last May approved a constitutional amendment requiring a three-fifths vote by each house to pass bills "for raising revenue." The 1995 Legislature put the measure on the ballot.

Backers argued that the goal was to ensure that tax measures approved are the result of broad consensus. Foes of the proposal said it could impair the Legislature's ability to deal with money problems.

The new measure is supported by the two top leaders for the legislative session, Senate President-elect Brady Adams and Lynn Lundquist, who will be House speaker. Both are Republicans.

Lundquist does not see the new law as a big

hurdle, on grounds that major tax measures seldom emerge from the Legislature unless they have fairly broad support.

"I tend to think on major issue, once you define a problem, you build a consensus," said the Powell Butte rancher. "I would be surprised if the three-fifths requirement is a real roadblock."

Adams, a Grants Pass savings and loan president, said he views the three-fifths requirement as "not a negative but as a positive thing. We're going to have to have both bipartisan and broad-based support for any tax measure," he said.

The new rules require 18 votes in the 30-member Senate and 36 votes in the 60-member House to approve revenue-raising measures. Deciding which bills are covered by the requirement could be difficult.

The Legislative Counsel Office said bills having "as a purpose or intended goal the raising of revenue" generally would need a three-fifths vote.

But bills "that only incidentally raise revenue" would not, according to a written opinion issued by the Legislature's legal staff.

Many bills raising fees to cover costs of services would not fall under the three-fifths vote

requirement, the lawyers say. But measures plainly intended to raise taxes will require three-fifths votes. That applies even if lawmakers just refer a measure to the ballot.

Lundquist said a gasoline tax increase is certain to be considered by legislators next year and that the three-fifths vote rule clearly would pertain to that measure.

"One of the first places this measure will apply is on the transportation tax," Lundquist said.

But other cases will not be so clear, both leaders say. Adams said the Legislature will need to pass a statute saying what the three-fifths vote rule is supposed to cover.

"I support the measure's basic concept, but I do not want to get into a position that we don't know what the rules are," he said.

The three-fifths vote measure was put on the ballot by relatively close votes in the Legislature, and critics say it will cause unnecessary problems.

"It is a needless additional complication getting in the way of the majority working its will," said Senate Minority Leader Cliff Trow, D-Corvallis, who opposed the measure.

He said the requirement "is a wall in the way of good decision making."

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