



Joint efforts to re-balance Oregon's budget continue

With a projected \$830 million budget deficit and a Feb. 8 deadline, new proposals offer plans for the state's future

By John Liebhardt
Oregon Daily Emerald

After crunching numbers for three different budget-balancing proposals this month, higher education officials and student leaders are waiting for the smoke to clear before taking any lobbying action.

Oregon legislators will meet Feb. 8 to find a solution to the state's projected \$830 million budget deficit. That will be the right time, student leaders said, to remind their representatives of the importance of reading, writing and arithmetic at the post-secondary level.

The Oregon Student Association, a group that represents students at nine statewide universities and community colleges, will not be lobbying in support of any particular budget proposal.

"We talk a lot about the importance of services that protect students," said John Wykoff, legislative director for OSA. He pointed out that OSA, along with student governments such as ASUO, will busy themselves stressing the importance of specific issues such as the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Childcare Block Grant.

"We will not talk about the revenue side of the matter," he said.

"(Legislators) are going to have to work that out themselves."

Finding compromise at the state legislature may be tough work indeed. With the release of three balancing proposals in as many weeks, legislators are busy trying to find a solution to Oregon's dire fiscal straits.

"I don't see any sign of an agreement," said state Sen. Tony Corcoran, D-Cottage Grove. He pointed out that moderate members of the democratic caucus want to strike a deal with Republicans before the special session begins. Currently, Republicans control the House 32 to 28 and the Senate 16 to 14.

All three proposals hit the Oregon University System with cuts. The plan by the bi-partisan legislative budget committee, the so-called Gang of Five, calls for \$526 million in program cuts, including \$48.5 million for OUS. Gov. John Kitzhaber's plan recommends \$414 million in program cuts, including \$44.5 million for OUS.

To make Oregonians understand the seriousness of the budget shortfall, Kitzhaber also released an "all-cuts" plan that proposed no revenue enhancing. The plan proposed \$830 million in cuts, including \$84 million in cuts for OUS.

Speaking to a group of local leaders Friday, Kitzhaber remained cautiously optimistic that he could strike a deal with the legislature on half of his plan — the spending cuts. "We are only about \$100 million

apart," he said. "I'm confident on the budget side of things we can reach some sort of accommodation."

However, Kitzhaber said finding agreement on how to pay for the difference will be difficult. The main point of contention is Kitzhaber's plan to raise taxes on beer, wine and cigarettes. He also wants to repeal Ballot Measure 88 that allows Oregonians to deduct up to \$5,000 in federal tax bills on their state taxes. The Gang of Five's plan calls for no tax hikes, nor does it call for a repeal of Measure 88, which voters passed 51 to 49 percent in 2000.

Kitzhaber, who cannot run for reelection in November, received a warm response from the crowd Friday for his plan. However, he may have a harder time with legislators who do not want to raise taxes during an election year.

Authors of the proposals admit none of the plans is written in stone. After looking over Kitzhaber's proposal Wednesday, the Gang of Five is revising its own plan. The governor is also malleable to changes.

Members of the audience Friday warned Kitzhaber about the adverse effects the beer and wine tax may have on the growing brewing industry in Portland.

"These proposals are on the table, and if any of them get legs we need to have a serious discussion of them," he said.

E-mail community editor John Liebhardt at johnliebhardt@dailyemerald.com.

News brief

Gubernatorial candidate to speak at law center

Gubernatorial candidate Bev Stein will be among the five women speaking with students at 4:30 p.m. today at the "Working for Social Change: Women in Politics" seminar in Room 110 of the Knight Law Center.

The seminar, which is free to the public, will focus on the role of women in Oregon politics. It is

sponsored by the University School of Law Women's Law Forum and the Wayne Morse Center for Law & Politics.

"Working for Social Change" is the latest in a series of events that are sponsored by the Women's Law Forum and aimed at keeping law students passionate about legal issues, according to group member Lisa Hartrich.

"We're trying to start a tradition of events that remind students why they went to law school," she said.

Stein, an attorney and former Multnomah County executive, will sit on the panel with state Sen. Susan Castillo, D-Eugene, Oregon Court of Appeals Judge Virginia Linder, Multnomah County Commissioner Serena Cruz and Mia Shorey, campaign manager for state Rep. Kathy Lowe.

Stein will also take advantage of her time on campus to meet with student groups and with University President Dave Frohnmayer.

—Leon Tovey

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In 2001 the University participated in a survey regarding underrepresented populations.

Lead researcher Dr. Sue Rankin will provide a forum to hear information regarding the initial significance of the report on

Wednesday, January 30th, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.
EMU Ben Linder Room.

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