Governor touts scholarship program in Legislature

Gov. Ted Kulongoski said he wants to amend the state constitution to expand education opportunities

By A. Sho Ikeda
Reporter

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski pushed to increase funding for students early last week by introducing a plan to place a financial aid program in the state Constitution.

The governor made his first legislative committee appearance of the current session June 24 to support Senate Bill 644, which would create a new endowment fund to provide need-based financial aid for Oregon high school graduates, and Senate Joint Resolution 28, which would amend the state Constitution.

"Our economy and quality of life will be paid back many times over to-morrow if we invest in the minds and potential of young people today," Kulongoski said in a speech.

The Access Scholarships for Education Trust is one of Kulongoski's center-piece initiatives. Kulongoski made access to higher education a major public policy issue and platform item during his gubernatorial campaign last year.

The fund would receive money from interest earned on university tuition and fees, and from a five percent portion of the capital gains taxes paid by individuals and corporations.

Only interest from the ASET would be used to grant scholarships to eligible students for use at private and public colleges in Oregon. Kulongoski said that he wanted the fund to established

the fund in the state Constitution so that it would be protected from legislators who would want to use the money for filling future budget holes.

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>
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> spokeswoman for Kulongoski

Mary Ellen Glynn, spokeswoman for Kulongoski's office, said the governor hopes that private investors will contribute to the trust fund.

"We hope to have around $2.5 billion in the fund when it is estab-

lished," Glynn said. "We could then have more than $100 million available for scholarships."

Glynn noted that it could take awhile to find money for the fund, but that the results would be well worth it.

"If it can't help you today, it would be great if it helps your kids go to college," she said.

Some people criticized Kulongoski's proposal, however.

Some complained that the trust fund would allow students to use scholarship money to pay tuition at private religious colleges.

Andrea Meyer, legislative director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, believes that the proposal would violate the state Constitution's ban on using public money to support private religious institutions.

Meyer alleged that the proposal conflicts with Article 1, Section 5 of the state Constitution.

"That part of the Constitution states that no money can be used by the government to benefit any religious institution," Meyer said.

Kulongoski

The Senate Ways and Means Committee is currently considering the bill, and the Senate Revenue Committee is considering the resolution.

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were unlikely to be present.

"Nobody I know heard a word about this pre-hearing," he said. "This should have been out where people know about it. I think the process doesn't smell good, although we don't have all the facts yet." He added that he doesn't want to accuse the administration of being underhanded because he doesn't know the details of the changes or its intentions.

In some respects, ASUO agreed with Stahl, saying the administration has not been as forthcoming as possible. ASUO spokeswoman Taraneh Foster said that the administration has done a poor job of keeping the group updated on the progress of changes in the code. She said that at the last Programs Council Meeting, to which ASUO sent a representative,

University Registrar Herb Chereck and Vice President for Student Affairs Anne Leavitt presented draft 5.0 of the privacy code. That was the first time ASUO heard of the changes, Foster said.

"We've still been scrambling to find out why it was draft 5.0 we were included in, and not earlier drafts," she said, noting that ASUO is still trying to determine its role in future drafts.

Chereck had a different perspective, however.

He defended the administration, saying that the June 3 meeting wasn't even mandatory, but that it elected to hold the conference in order to further inform interested parties. He also said that at the June 20 meeting he stayed an hour after the meeting to answer questions.

Chereck added that he wished administrators could have started the

process earlier to better match students' schedules; however, he said Leavitt and himself have worked diligently to update numerous groups around campus, keeping them informed of the changes.

"Anne and I felt very strongly about the need to go out and meet with various groups on campus," he said.

Both Chereck and Leavitt met with the Faculty Advisory Council, the Undergraduate Council, the Graduate Council, the Associated Student Presidential Advisory Council, the Residence Hall Association, the ASUO program directors, the Student Affairs Council and the Council of Academic Deans, Chereck said. Chereck and Leavitt told each group why the changes were being put in place, but didn't get into the details of the federal rules unless they were asked. They did tell each of the groups about the June 3 pre-hearing, he said.

Chereck, Grier, Leavitt and Randy Geller, the director of policy and legal affairs, will hold a meeting Wednesday to discuss the policy. The meeting is not open to the public, and both Geller and Chereck said that they weren't sure exactly what was to be discussed. For now, the administration is scheduled to submit the final draft of the policy code to the Secretary of State on Aug. 11. After that, the changes will officially integrate into the student privacy code.

The approaching deadline has frustrated Stahl, who noted that the final changes will be made before fall term starts. He said that effectively prevents many students from giving their input on the final changes. He knows a number of people that have submitted formal requests to delay the final decision time in order to get more student input, he said. Geller confirmed that people have filed requests to delay the deadline.

Aside from updating the privacy code to meet federal standards, the University plans to make a handful of other changes. The student directory is slated to include e-mail addresses, enrollment status and graduate teaching fellow status. Students have expressed fears that printing e-mail addresses could lead to e-mail spamming, Foster said.

Students will still have the option of blocking that information, however.

The new privacy code allows a student to submit a "restriction of directory information" form, submitted to the Office of the Registrar, to block the printing of his or her information. The restriction would take effect "as soon as is reasonably practicable," the new code reads. The new language marks a change from the seven-day wait in the old code.

Jared Paben is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

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"It has become one of the efforts of this ASUO administration to get this bill passed," Kjos said.

Many other states, including Washington, Texas and California, have passed similar legislation.

Oregon Student Association Spokeswoman Amelie Welden said that, according to the Oregon University System, the bill would add about 20 to 250 students to a university system that serves 78,000 total students. The OUS also stated that it can absorb the enrollment increase without

additional cost.

Senate Bill 10, which was introduced in February and was approved by the Senate on March 17, has proven controversial in the Legislature. House Education Committee Chairman Rep. Vic Backlund, R-Keizer, said that he had concerns about the cost of the bill. He said that the Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office estimated the bill would drain $780,000 from the state in lost tuition funds.

"You can see either side of the issue easily," Backlund said. "I just had to look at the issue in fiscal terms. The cost was too great."

Rep. Billy Dalto, R-Salem, disagreed.

"Our state policy says that we must educate any resident of Oregon, legal or illegal, from kindergarten through grade 12," said Dalto, who co-sponsored the bill. "But once they get to college, all bets are off. To me, that doesn't make sense and it doesn't seem fair."

The bill has seemingly stalled in the House Education Committee, but officials said that it could be attached to a new bill in the future if it doesn't come back on the House floor for a vote.

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CAMPUS BUZZ

Welcome to "Campus buzz," a list of what's happening on campus. Our intention is to set aside a space where we publish a notice of events that otherwise might not receive any coverage.

We will accept "Campus buzz" submissions at the Emerald front desk (Suite 300, EMU), by fax (346-5821) and by e-mail (campusbuzz@dailyemerald.com). Here are the guidelines for submitting events for publication:

• Please include a description of the event, location, date, time, cost, phone number and contact person (tell us if you would like the phone number and contact name published).

• The Emerald will attempt to print as many event listings as possible.

However, space limitations and priority will be taken into consideration. Submission does not guarantee publication.

• First priority is given to one-time, free events happening on campus that are sponsored by a student organization or University department.

• Lower priority is given to events that cost money, that are not unique or one-time occurrences, that happen off-campus and that are not sponsored by campus organizations.

• Submissions for events will be considered only if they are received by noon two business days before the event. Example: A Tuesday event listing must be received by noon Friday.

• Listings may be run only once per submission; ongoing events must be resubmitted each time they occur.