

# Lawmakers brainstorm ways to trim budget

DIANE DIETZ  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A bipartisan group of Oregon lawmakers Friday unveiled a list of ideas about how to contain the cost of state government — this Legislative session, and for decades into the future — including a two-year hiring freeze, a consolidation of public worker health plans and an upgrade of the state's debt collection practices.

Releasing the page-long bulleted list of concepts signals a new way of doing business at the Legislature, House Speaker Tina Kotek said.

Lawmakers worked to get all the ideas out on the table — and now the discussion can begin, she said.

Lawmakers offered no information about how much any of the ideas would save. Those figures will come later, they said.

The list is conceptual, Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, emphasized.

"At this point, no deci-

sion have been made," she said.

But the union that represents many state employees, SEIU-503, objected to how many of the concepts involved clamping down on state workers, their jobs and their benefits.

"It's outrageous that our legislature would issue a cost containment proposal in which 13 out of 18 proposals are directed at public employees who earn less than the market value of their work," union President Steve Demarest said in a written statement. "This is an effort to scapegoat people who have dedicated their lives to public service when we should be doing something about our out-of-whack, lowest-in-the-nation corporate taxes."

Here is the list of cost containment concepts:

**Temporary, immediate actions to address the 2017-2019 biennium:**

- » Freeze hiring of non-essential positions.
- » Do not automatically

grant standard inflationary increases for services and supplies costs.

**Permanent, ongoing actions to curb long-term growth:**

- » Limit state government full-time equivalent positions to 1 percent of the population instead of the current limit of 1.5% of the population.
- » Ensure periodic review of position vacancies for savings and position elimination.
- » Require legislative review of state agency debt collection performance and approval of agency proposals to write-off debt.
- » Review Lottery Commission administrative costs and the transfer rate to determine if more funds could be transferred for public purposes.
- » Manage bonding costs (including paying for small projects with cash rather than increasing the overall cost of the project by using long-term debt).

- » Additional rigor in vendor contracting process. Take steps to reduce PERS costs.
- » Increase current and future employees' share in retirement costs for all public employees who are members of PERS.
- » Require all PERS employers to set aside excess operating funds for the prepayment of future employer costs.
- » Determine whether the amortization period is set for the appropriate length of time
- » Ensure the PERS administrative reserves are at an appropriate level and use any excess administrative reserves to reduce the unfunded liability. Continue to improve management of and contain health care costs for public employees.
- » Combine the Public Employee Benefit Board (PEBB) and the Oregon Educators Benefit Board (OEBB) and the Oregon Educators Benefit Board (OEBB).
- » Require PEBB and

OEBB to stay within a 3.4 percent annual growth rate.

- » Tie PEBB and OEBB non-primary care rates to a percentage of Medicare rates.

**Ensure compensation increases are within budget for the biennium in which they are granted and do not exceed normal growth rates for future biennia.**

- » Manage timing of cost of living increases to restrain future roll up costs.
- » Any cost of living increases for employees of organizations reliant on state General Fund follow the same rules as increases for state employees.
- » Limit collective bargaining agreements to two years for economic issues.
- » Change the collective bargaining process to even numbered years so the Governor's budget proposal includes the full cost of increases for the upcoming biennium.

Require legislative approval for the following before they may be implemented:

- 1 Reclassifications of positions
- 2 Addition of new steps to salary ranges for state positions

**Cost-Containment Budget Principles:**

- » Do not create programs and start them at the end of the biennium.
- » Do not create new programs or funds that have no money to support them.
- » Use one-time funds for one-time investments or save them for an emergency.
- » Do not automatically replace lost federal or other funding.
- » Require analysis of ongoing costs rather than initial costs for all new programs.
- » Review performance and need for current programs and services to determine whether new proposals are a higher priority than current programs and services.

## Much

Continued from Page 1A

gula — along with some over-wintered and storage crops, such as leeks, onions, beets, garlic — maybe even some potatoes.

"We'll have local beef, lamb, pork, and chicken, as well as eggs, and a variety of fresh baked goods, including the famous Silver Falls Bread Company artisan sourdough bread," Burgé said. "As the season progresses, the variety of produce will expand hugely. By August, our produce stands are brimming with a selection of over 60 fruits and vegetables."

Open-market wares weave well with the right ambiance, and Silverton's organizers are on top of that.

"Our market has live music every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., and we have a full calendar this year with sets from the Silver Creek String Band, Al Stark and the Other Guys, Tracey Reynolds, and many others," Burgé said. "We have a seating area avail-

able for people to enjoy lunch at market, and hope that people will find a good selection of hot, ready-to-eat food this year to have while listening to music and visiting with each other."

She added that one weekly market feature, Power of Produce or POP Kids' Club, allows kids ages 5 to 12 years to collect \$2 worth of tokens to spend on any fruits, vegetables, or edible plants at the market.

"The club is completely free for kids to sign up and is sponsored entirely by community donations and grants," Burgé noted.

The market also offers a free "first-time market goer" token for the first 100 customers who are new visitors to Silverton Farmers Market. The market will also accept EBT cards as well.

"This is the first year we are doing this, and hope people will take us up on it," Burgé said.

If you want to learn more, contact Burgé or Stacy Higby at Silverton Market@gmail.com or visit [www.silvertonfarmersmarket.org](http://www.silvertonfarmersmarket.org).

**Also on Silverton's horizon**

- » Silverton Together hosts "Celebration of Cul-

tures," 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, May 5 downtown. That annual, festive event coincides with Silverton Chamber's First Friday, so Silverton looks like the place to be this coming Cinco de Mayo.

"The next day an opportunity to sample the wines of the Cascade foothills is provided in Mt. Angel at Taste. Learn. Celebrate., held 12 to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 6, at the Festhalle, 500 Wilco Road, NE.

Billed as a kickoff to Oregon Wine Month, the event takes place before a backdrop of live music and provides information about wine making, including nuances of the great grapes grown in our region. Cost is \$15.

» Silverton Health Run takes place Saturday, May 13, beginning at 8:30 a.m. with a 1-mile course for the youngest runners in the mix, continuing with a subsequent 5k outing. All geared for fun and health, the courses begin at the Family Birth Center, 342 Fairview St.

"This family-fun event attracts runners, walkers, and community members to cheer on participants," said Kay Seiler, volunteer services manager for Legacy Health (formerly

Silverton Health), "Our goal is to have a fun affordable event for all ages."

Seiler said the event was started by local physician Michael Grady, and drew 40 participants its first year.

"We have been blessed to grow into a community favorite event and host around 500 participants each year," Seiler said. "We have been able to keep registration costs low through support from our sponsors: Ulven Companies, Fancy Stitches, Our Town, Willamette Valley Bank, Mt Angel Chiropractic, Silver Falls Coffee Co, PT Northwest, Portraitmaster Studios and Silverton Fitness.

"We also have great support from our community members and support from Silverton High School Health Occ stu-

dents, Silverton High Drum Line, Marion County Cadets, Silverton Runners Club, the City of Silverton," among others, she added.

Also look for some homemade baked goods and desserts available. Learn more at [silvertonhealth.org/funrun](http://silvertonhealth.org/funrun).

» Mother's Day events in the area abound on the weekend of May 13-14, including the 39th Annual Birding and Wildflower Festival 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Silver Falls State Park. Other events for mom include a tea and fashion show and a firefighters breakfast.

Visit Silverton Chamber's event listings — [www.silvertonchamber.org](http://www.silvertonchamber.org) — for more ideas on how to treat mom.

» Another can't-miss day in town is Saturday, May 20, which unfolds

with Kiwanis Club of Silverton's popular annual Silverton Pet Parade, the 3rd Annual Bike Fair, a continued Teen Show at Silverton Art Association's Borland Gallery, and Farm Fresh Dinner offered at GeerCrest in the evening.

### Next chat

**What:** Creekside Chat

**Where:** Silver Creek Coffee House, 111 Water St., Silverton


**When:** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, May 3 (first and third Wednesdays)

**Questions and information:** Contact Justin Much, [jmuch@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:jmuch@statesmanjournal.com); cell 503-508-8157; or follow at [twitter.com/justinmuch](https://twitter.com/justinmuch)




CARA PALLONE / APPEAL TRIBUNE

The Silver Creek String Band performs in downtown Silverton during the annual Celebration of Cultures event in 2012.



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