

Kitzhaber returns to Salem with education in mind; Republican majority settles into Congress

ELISE BROWN

The Oregon and American political landscapes are about to change. John Kitzhaber, Democrat, will begin serving his third term as governor on Jan. 10, and starting on Jan. 3, the Republican party will be the majority party in the House of Representatives.

Kitzhaber was previously Oregon's governor from 1995 to 2003, and his achievements include the Oregon Children's Plan, Oregon Salmon Plan and Oregon Business Plan. Before his tenure as governor,

he was in the Oregon State Senate, where he helped pass the Oregon Health Plan. He cited these accomplishments all through his campaign, which may have helped in his win over Chris Dudley. He will be the first governor in the state's history to serve more than two terms.

Kitzhaber is now setting his sights on boosting the Oregon economy by creating jobs and balancing the state budget, as well as setting education as a high priority. So far, his transition teams have made plans to expand the budget from a two-year

plan to ten years, reorganize Oregon's education system to emphasize early childhood schooling and fire 24 agency heads unless they agree to help

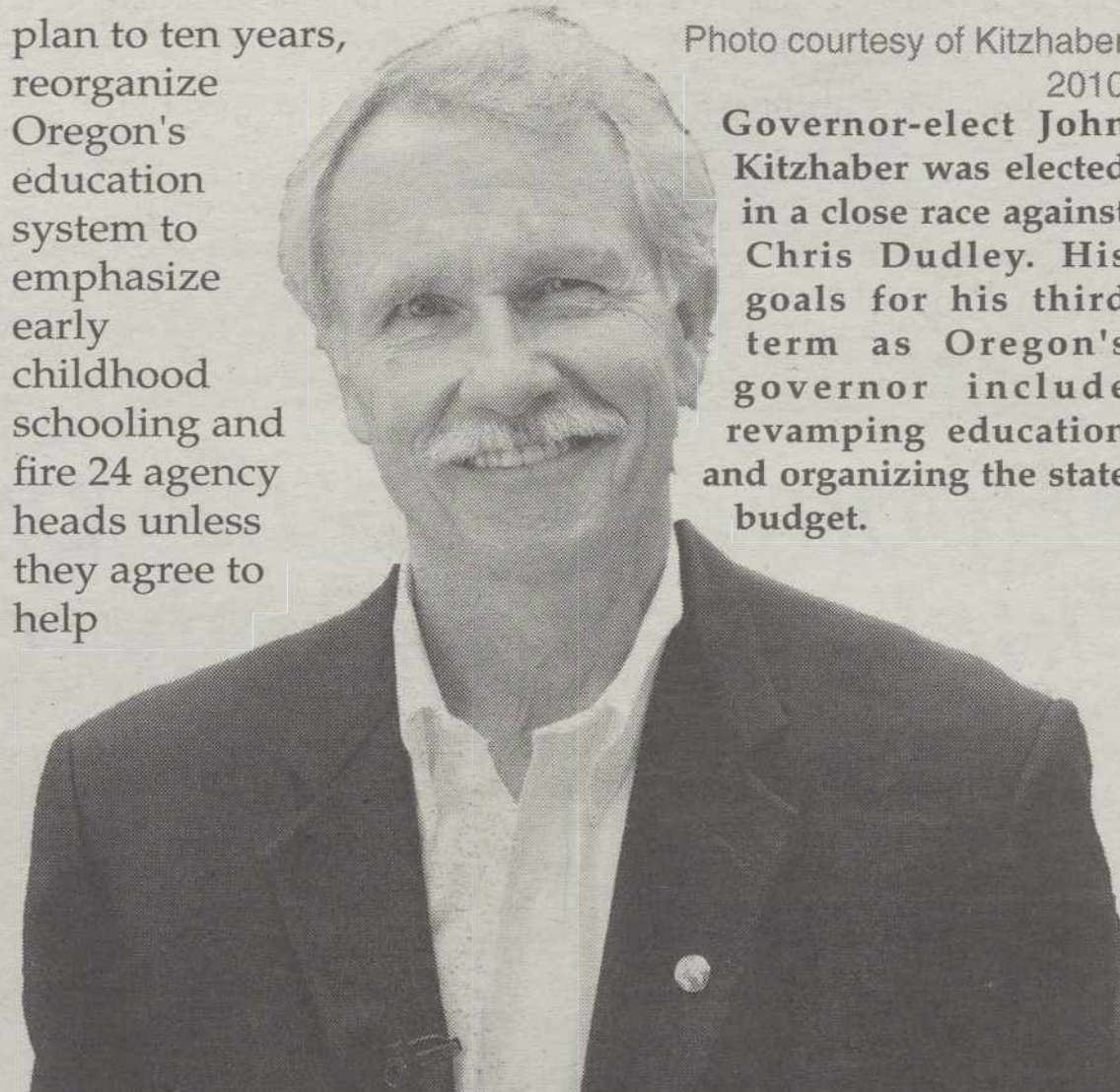


Photo courtesy of Kitzhaber 2010

Governor-elect John Kitzhaber was elected in a close race against Chris Dudley. His goals for his third term as Oregon's governor include revamping education and organizing the state budget.

follow through with his plans.

Overall, Kitzhaber's plan is to reset the state government's priorities. While state spending on the prison system has increased, Oregon schools have been suffering. Three out of his four main transition teams focus on education and reorganizing the budget so that schools are given more attention.

Meanwhile, in the nation's Capitol, the 112th Congress is preparing for next year. The "lame duck" session is coming to an end, and so far the House has passed a bill making tax cuts for those making \$250k or less per year permanent—which the Senate ultimately shot down—a bill guaranteeing health insurance to survivors and responders to the Sept. 11 attacks and other bills. These will be the last bills to pass the House while Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of California, is the Speaker. Starting Jan. 3, John Boehner, Republican of Ohio, will serve as speaker of the House.

Since the two chambers of Congress will be led by two opposing parties, some are concerned with how they will efficiently pass bills. The Senate will remain mostly Democratic, which makes it easier for it to pass items on the Obama agenda, despite the possibility of a Republican filibuster. Republican House leaders have expressed many times that they are aiming to repeal existing Obama policies and block votes on bills he supports. This means that over the next two years, the Obama White House's goals will be more difficult to pass through the opposing party.

A complaint many incumbent Democrats received as they campaigned this election cycle was that they did not appear proud of what they achieved in the first two years of the Obama presidency, such as the health care reform passed in March, the financial reform passed in July and the stimulus bill passed in 2009. With the Tea Party gaining a stronghold in many states and frustration towards the Obama administration from both sides growing, Democrats were seen as weaker on a national scope. The result was a 50-vote majority of Republicans over Democrats in the House.

Applied Academics Program collapses, moves to Wilsonville

ALISON FIELDHOUSE

If a student needs an alternative to the standard education system due to special needs, where can they find it? For most places, West Linn High School included, it's the Special Education Program. This year, one of the programs, the Applied

at places such as Morrow's Flowers, Bullseye Coffee and Mirage Hair Design."

Teachers that were a part of the program worked with each individual student to focus on their specific needs. Being in a smaller program allowed the students to receive more attention and make stronger

only as a loss for the students involved in the program, but also a loss for the students at WLHS that weren't involved in the program.

"It's a loss for the students at the high school because they no longer have the experience of working with people who are challenged. People that

They had a sense of pride for the schools as well as themselves.

"Even though I was in the program, I was still a West Linn Lion," Megan said.

Even though the AAP has moved, other special education programs still exist. These programs include Alternative Instruction Methods (AIM) and the Resource Program. AIM is designed for students that have a behavioral aspect that impacts their learning process. The Resource Program provides support for an assortment of needs that students may have, such as facilitating communication for those who have difficulty doing so.

Along with the two programs, the ERC provides the Achievement Center. The Achievement Center provides support for students by working on study habits and monitoring class work. There are also LAB classes overseen by Judy Nowlin, ERC Specialist, Crutcher and Bean that are designed to help students that need assistance in the reading and writing and to also provide structure to their school day.

"The students who have stayed at West Linn High have experienced successes in their general classes this year. This is largely due to teachers' excellent work in helping the students succeed," Crutcher said.

Although there are other programs, the loss of the AAP has affected the type of support that the students choosing to stay at West Linn receive. The level of support and the relationships that students made are irreplaceable.

"Being in a small group gives you time one-on-one to help you focus. Teachers tried to provide support for each student individually to focus on their specific needs," Megan said.



Photo by Alex Houston

Greg Bean, Learning Specialist, Trevor Menne, AIM specialist, Judy Nowlin and Laura Crutcher, Learning Specialists, and Jennifer Freeborn, Assistant Principal, discuss the Special Education Program. This year, the Applied Academics Program was moved from West Linn to Wilsonville High School. Students involved in the program had the choice to stay at WLHS or follow the program to WHS.

Academics Program was moved from WLHS to join the program already established at Wilsonville.

"The Applied Academics Program focuses on teaching life skills as well as a transitional career focus," Laura Crutcher, ERC Specialist, said.

Most students involved in the program graduate with a modified diploma. They also learn skills in areas such as cooking, money management and job readiness. Those that were a part of it also had opportunities to be involved in the community as well through student internships and employment.

"Students were greatly involved in the community as the AAP provided internships to students in areas linked to their career interest," Crutcher said. "We provided internships

connections with teachers.

"One of the most memorable experiences I had while involved in the program was when my English teacher, Laura Crutcher, took me to Starbucks for my birthday," Megan Silvers, Class of 2010, said.

When the decision was made to move the program to Wilsonville, due to loss of staff, including last year's Department Head, Toni Snapp and math specialist, Jeff Gross, and to consolidate the two programs into one, students involved had the choice of either staying at West Linn with existing programs, or switching to Wilsonville to follow the AAP. The problems that arose from the move include a much longer bus ride for students in West Linn to be transported to Wilsonville.

Some saw the move not

have those challenges exist throughout society and now, the students will lack that experience," Lynn Silvers, parent, said.

Other parents were dissatisfied that their children would have to leave WLHS in order to stay with the AAP. But they worried that their children wouldn't receive the support they need if they stayed.

"Students were forced to make a change they didn't want. Special Education students that stayed at West Linn are in regular education classes without support for them to be successful," an anonymous parent said.

What the program gave to the students involved was the chance to attend a regular high school with their peers. They could still be in mainstream classes, but they had a teacher to provide individual support.