

New analysis finds Oregon hit hard by cuts in president's budget for '08

Oregon would lose \$123 million in federal funding next year for a wide range of public structures, including K-12 education and Head Start, under President Bush's budget for 2008, according to a report released by the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The funding cuts, scheduled to deepen in future years under the president's proposal, would force Oregon to either raise taxes to compensate for the lost federal funds, or reduce basic public services. The analysis prompted criticism of the president's budget by Governor Ted Kulongoski, advocates for Oregon children, and a local research institute.

Janet Bauer, a policy analyst at the Oregon Center for Public Policy who reviewed the analysis, expressed disappointment at the president's priorities. "This budget says that maintaining critical infrastructure in Oregon such as education, safe drinking water and public safety is not as important as extending tax breaks, including tax giveaways for millionaires. These priorities would send Oregon and the country in the wrong direction," she said.

Bauer also noted that the president's budget worsens the federal deficit by including massive tax cuts along with the program cuts. "The president's budget would worsen the federal government's fiscal situation, because the tax cuts would cost much more than the program cuts would save," she said.

"This budget is a roadmap toward greater inequality in Oregon," Bauer added. Under the president's budget, the average millionaire nationally would receive \$162,000 in 2012 alone, while funding cuts would harm low- and moderate-income families across the country, including in Oregon.

The new Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report estimates, for example, that the President Bush's budget would:

- Cut federal K-12 education funding to Oregon by \$70 million over the next five years, relative to the 2007 level. The president's proposal would take back much of the additional funding Congress provided to help states implement the federal No Child Left Behind law.

"We simply can't produce the results everyone wants for our students if the federal government is going to reduce its investment," said Jonah Edelman of Stand for Children.

- Cut Oregon's child care funding by \$5 million over the next five years relative to the 2007 level. Today, federal child care funding is already below the 2002 level.

"If we want to support working parents and ensure that our kindergartners are ready to learn, then we need to invest in quality child care and early education. This budget goes in the opposite direction, leaving more children without the child care help they need," said Cathy Kaufman, of the nonpartisan advocacy group, Children First for Oregon.

- Cut Oregon's Head Start funding by \$2 million in 2008 and by \$22 million over the next five years relative to the 2007 level. These cuts would come on top of cuts already made to the program.

Faced with these funding cuts, Oregon's Head Start programs have several choices. They can serve fewer children; cut back on teachers' salaries, classroom materials, and the specialized services they provide to children; or they can try to raise money from other sources. The federal funding Oregon would receive in 2008 would serve 1,000 fewer children than we would serve if funding had kept pace with inflation since 2002.

The president's proposal is inconsistent with the priority outlined by Gov. Kulongoski to fully fund Head Start so that all eligible Oregon children can benefit.

"Head Start is critical to ensuring every Oregon child enters kindergarten ready to learn. Now is the time to move forward to make early childhood education available to all eligible kids — not take steps backward with budget cuts and reduced enrollment, which is what the president's budget would deliver," said Kulongoski.

- Cut Oregon's funding for low-income energy assistance by \$5.5 million next year and by \$31 million over the next five years. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides funding to states to help vulnerable households pay their home heating bills. Most households that receive LIHEAP include someone who is elderly or a person with disabilities. The increase in energy prices over the past few years has made LIHEAP more important than ever.

- Cut Oregon's funding for clean and safe drinking water by \$5 million next year and by \$29 million over the next five years. Some of the biggest cuts in the president's budget would come in environmental programs. Oregon relies on federal resources for sewage treatment plants and clean drinking water programs. Wastewater infrastructure projects would be cut

(Turn to Page 11)

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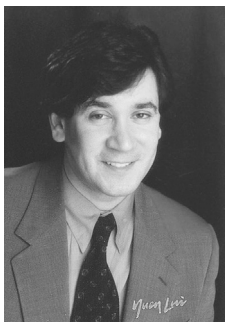
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