

...Legislature adjourns

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would have generated \$343 million for roads. But the plan needed some Republican votes because of Oregon's requirement that tax increases pass by a 3/5 supermajority. Republicans decided to hold the transportation package hostage in order to get Democrats to repeal the Clean Fuels program. Democrats balked, and stalemate resulted.

- ☒ **\$337 million State Capitol renovation** The State of Oregon has spent more than \$30 million planning a renovation of the Capitol building — a four-year \$337 million project. But the project didn't get the green light from lawmakers.

PUBLIC SECTOR

- ☒ **A deal's a deal** In 1995, a Republican-led legislature rewrote Oregon's public employee collective bargaining law to reduce union power. Twenty years later, public employee unions are still trying to get Democratic majorities to undo the damage. One example is "expedited bargaining." A public employer like the City of Portland can sign a union contract, then come back soon after and say something new has come up, and unilaterally impose new terms — over union objections — after 90 days of desultory "expedited bargaining." Oregon AFSCME and Oregon School Employees Association pushed a bill to require binding arbitration in such cases if the two sides couldn't agree. It passed the House 32-25. In the Senate ... it couldn't get a floor vote.

- ☒ **Right to unionize** The Oregon State Bar is a quasi-public agency that polices misconduct by lawyers. Should its staff have the same right as other workers to unionize? Oregon House Democrats thought so, and approved a bill to make the Bar subject to Oregon's collective bargaining law — on a party-line 35-25 vote. In the Senate, it died in committee.

- ☒ **Improvements for crisis unit workers** Oregon's Stabilization and Crisis Unit is a network of 23 secure group homes where about 250 AFSCME-represented staff work with sometimes violent adults or children with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are deemed a risk to the public, themselves, or fellow residents. AFSCME was able to pass a bill this year to allow the staff the same early retirement benefits that police and fire fighters get, and another bill creating a task force to improve staff safety.

HEALTH CARE

Service Employees (SEIU) Local 49, which represents 7,600 health care workers, has a campaign called Act Now for a Healthy Oregon that pushes for industry reforms. But this year's effort was opposed by dozens of lobbyists representing the medical-industrial complex, and they're used to getting their way in Salem.

- ☒ **Health care price transparency** One bill would have required health care facilities to publish prices, so consumers could make informed choices about where to go. Instead, lawmakers passed what state Sen. Chip Shields (D-Portland) called "sham hospital rate transparency." Hospitals will submit price data for the most common procedures, but the state will keep it secret, instead publishing the "median" price.

- ☒ **Taxing health care facilities that don't provide charity care** Oregon's non-profit hospitals get all kinds of tax breaks — no property taxes, no income taxes, nothing — but face no requirements on how much charity care they're supposed to provide in exchange. In fact, SEIU says, hospital spending on charity care declined by nearly half in the first half of 2014. But a bill to link the property tax exemption to the amount of charity care died without a committee vote.

- ☒ **Hospital staffing ratio** SEIU and the Oregon Nurses Association did win a set of improvements to a nurse staffing ratio law. The 2001 law requires hospitals to have a minimum staffing plan developed by a joint committee of nurse managers and direct care nurses. Now, that

committee will have a position for a CNA or LPN too, and at unionized hospitals, the direct care nurses will be selected by the union. Also, committee meetings will be open to hospital staff and to union reps. Health care providers will also get at least 10 hours off after working 12 hours in a 24-hour period. And nurses

will be allowed to refuse to work overtime if they believe that would jeopardize patient or employee safety.

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