



FRANK JORDAN / Clackamas Print

Groups of protesters and lobbyists gather on the steps of the Oregon State Capitol in Salem on Feb. 8 during the special session of the legislature called by Gov. John Kitzhaber. The special session was held to deal with the budget crisis that faces the state in the 2001-03 biennium. The session lasted until the wee hours of Feb. 11. Clackamas ASG members, along with student leaders from community colleges all over Oregon, attended the opening day of the legislative session.

## Budget battles loom as lawmakers hold special session

FRANK JORDAN

News Editor

Several members of the Associated Student Government here at Clackamas attended the opening of the Oregon legislative special session in Salem last Friday.

ASG President Stefan Myers and other members of student government made the trip to the capitol to help lobby legislative members and Gov. John Kitzhaber into saving major portions of the community college money that is given by the state to the colleges every year.

The special session called by Kitzhaber was in response to the state's \$715 million budget shortfall and the need to come up with a plan to balance the budget for the 2001-03 biennium. The leadership of the Legislature adjourned the session at approximately 4 a.m. Monday morning and sent a revised budget to the governor's desk. Kitzhaber was expected to veto

a significant portion of the proposed budget.

The governor was not happy that most of his proposed tax increases were not passed and the Oregon House and Senate did not approve the budget cuts he had hoped for. The governor opposes much of the legislature's plan, particularly the idea of tapping into school trust funds to help fund the shortfall. The governor wants to increase taxes on alcohol and cigarettes, and he also wants to delay an income tax cut that was approved by voters last fall.

A proposed 3.3 percent cut in community college funding was upheld in the final legislative budget, but may have to go back to the drawing board if the governor wields his veto upon it. Although cuts are inevitable at the community college level, local legislators were confident that the cuts would not be as bad as possible.

"Actually, things are looking pretty good for the community colleges. Everyone will have to take a hit, but

the proposed cuts should not be as severe," commented Sen. Verne Duncan (R-District 12), who serves the area that includes the college. "Every

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Duncan  
Senator  
(R-Dist. 12)

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Martha Schrader, wife and spokesperson for Democratic Rep. Kurt

Schrader of District 23, which includes CCC, said that her husband felt that "things were moving along, but probably not as well as he had hoped. Kurt really supports the community colleges, and hoped that severe cuts would not have to be made. Things were not as bad as the governor had made everything out to be."

A carnival-like atmosphere enveloped the capitol on Friday for the opening of the legislative session. Many citizens, lobbyists and media members came to Salem to witness the action, or in many cases, the inaction.

Lars Larson, radio talk show host for Newsradio 750 KXL, held court live on the air for most of the afternoon. Larson interviewed several legislators and citizens alike, asking their opinions on several topics related to the budget battle.

Many lobbying groups were also on hand at the capitol, everyone from environmentalists to those people looking to save portions of the Oregon Health Plan from proposed severe

cuts.

Students from all over the state showed up and took part in several rallies to try to sway lawmakers from cutting the education budget. Legislators have proposed cutting \$112 million from the K-12 education budget and borrowing \$120 million from the Common School Fund to help balance the budget.

"There is a tremendous emphasis placed on trying to prevent cuts to the K-12 budget. Oh, how I wish that were possible. What this plan does reflect is a reduction the education community most prefers," said Rep. Ben Westlund (R-District 55).

If Governor Kitzhaber vetoes portions of the legislative budget plan, then he will not have any choice but to reconvene state lawmakers into another special session to go at balancing the budget again. The second special session will probably be held near the end of February.

(Oregonian reports contributed to this story)

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### Pond profiled on "America's Most Wanted"

SALENA DE LA CRUZ

Opinion Editor

In an attempt to acquire more leads, the national television program "America's Most Wanted" aired the photo of Ashley Pond on Feb. 9. The 12-year old Oregon City girl vanished Jan. 9 on her way to the bus stop at approximately 8 a.m.

"Yeah, they aired it for all of seven seconds," said Cheryl Martin, Ashley's grandmother.

"It was a very brief segment," said Lieutenant John Stewart, Oregon City Police Department.

Martin believes the Oregon City Police Department contacted "America's Most Wanted" to obtain more leads to help find her granddaughter. But there are still leads that are being followed.

"We received three tips from the broadcast, but nothing substantial came from them," said Stewart.

"There's really nothing yet, more like we saw her here and there and that's been checked out, but that's really it," said Martin.

All leads are being followed and every avenue is being taken, but still there are no conclusions as to what happened to Ashley Pond the day she for school.

"They're (the authorities) are still following up on all the calls," said Martin.

"We're trying to find everyone she has come in contact with and there are literally hundreds, which include family, friends and people she went to school with," said Stewart.

Currently, the authorities are interviewing anyone who has had any type of contact with Ashley Pond.

"A few tips came in, but the FBI is not ready to release any information," said Beth Anne Steele, spokesperson for the FBI.

According to reports by KATU Channel Two News, the hard drive of her family's computer was looked at, but nothing was found.

According to reports by "America's Most Wanted," Ashley was last seen wearing a bikini top, jeans and Sketchers, by her sister. However, according to her grand-

mother, that is untrue.

"I don't think the school would let her wear that," said Martin. "I think it may have been a short crop top or something that had another shirt over it," added Martin.

When asked where Ashley's father was, Martin answered hesitantly, "I'm not sure where her father is. He doesn't have visitation."

"We have talked to all of her (Ashley's) blood relatives," said Stewart.

Pond's mother, Lori, has a boyfriend who helps to support the family.

Currently, no searches are being done of the outlying area. Cadaver dogs were used for a short time to search the complexes and garages of people on the property.

"I thing they're just doing background checks and following leads while interviewing anyone that has come in contact with Ashley," said Martin.

Leads will be reported as they come available to the press. Look in upcoming issues.