

Oregonians march for students

OREGON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ORGANIZES RALLY TO DEMAND HIGHER FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

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Even with temperatures close to freezing, the March for Our Students crowd stayed fired up.

On Presidents Day, nearly 4,000 people gathered outside of Oregon's State Capitol in Salem to demand legislators increase funding for education during the March for Our Students, a rally held by the Oregon Education Association.

Teachers, students and citizens stood together with signs proudly held overhead as buses brought in more participants. Attendees were encouraged to wear red during the march as the color is used to represent the support of education; red shirts promoting education funding were handed out to those who needed them.

About 25 members of Clackamas Community College — students and staff alike — took the trip down to Salem to advocate for community colleges.

CCC instructor Suzanne Munro, who is chair of the English as a second language department, said that she wants to see community colleges better funded in order to reduce student spending; having to spend more money on tuition each year creates roadblocks for students who are facing financial troubles, she said.

James Logan, a CCC maintenance support worker, shared Munro's hopes for reduced tuition.

Logan also commented on the need for funding for resources.

"It can actually hinder students' ability to learn without having the newest, latest, greatest technologies," Logan said.

Many teachers that attended were critical of class sizes, explaining the difficulties that came with such a hefty number of students.

"I'm here because my class sizes are so big that I cannot individually meet with my students, conference about the writing; I cannot help my students be better because I'm only one person and there are 40 of them in a class," said Becky Martin, a high school English teacher for the



Beaverton School District.

According to information provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, Oregon has one of the largest average classroom sizes while having only middling funding for education compared to the rest of the country at the K-12 level.

Colleges are affected by funding in regards to staffing, available classes, advanced technology and tuition costs.

The rally officially started at 10:30 a.m. with multiple guest speakers taking the mic. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici pledged herself to everyone as a partner in Congress and vowed to continue fighting for education and equity for all students.

The crowd clapped and cheered for the congresswoman.

Another speaker was Nichole Watson, a fourth-grade teacher at Rosa Parks Elementary School in North Portland. Watson advocated for the arts to be more accessible to students, for students to have better medical and emotional support and for students to have modern technology.

Watson passionately stated that students should have "teachers who they can see themselves in every single day." The crowd enthusiastically followed her speech



photos by Jonathan Villagomez



The march, held on Monday, drew 4,000 participants from around the state. Representatives from across the educational spectrum were present, including many from Clackamas Community College.

in support.

At 11 a.m., participants took to the streets and marched in a loop that started and ended at the Capitol. Marchers could be seen and heard from afar as they held their signs high and collectively chanted sayings such as "Red for Ed" and "Fund our schools."

The march lasted roughly 30 minutes, ending around 11:30 a.m.

Participants were encouraged to take a card and write down their stories to send to legislators in hopes of persuading them to boost education funding.

If you're interested in contacting legislators about education funding, you can call them, write a letter, an email or even send them a tweet. For contact information, visit www.contactingcongress.org.