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affordable housing policy or investments. When it comes to policy changes, I think the road block has more to do with the influence of special interest groups rather than a lack of leadership. When it comes to investments, our road block is the longstanding, structural revenue problem in our state. Again, if you want the state to prioritize investments in emergency housing assistance, homeless shelters, preservation of affordable housing, foreclosure counseling, Legal Aid Services to help low-income Oregonians deal with housing-related issues, or construction of new affordable housing – please tell your legislators that you want them to support revenue solutions that would allow adequate, stable investments in these areas.

If we can figure out how to raise additional revenue, I will be asking for \$250 million in additional state support to help local communities. This includes \$100 million for LIFT to help finance the construction of more affordable housing for low-income households; \$100 million for preservation for existing affordable units; and \$50 million for emergency housing and shelter assistance.

I.B.: Talk to us about tenant rights and what the Oregon legislature needs to do?

T.K.: I'm going to work very hard to help us build our way out of this crisis, but that solution will take time and that's not enough for families who are struggling right now, every day. That's why the Legislature will also need to discuss stronger protections for tenants in order to provide some immediate relief and stability for the 40 percent of Oregonians who are renters.

I will focus on three key tenant protections: lifting the statewide ban on rent control so local governments can pass rent stabilization ordinances designed to meet their community's needs; implementing a one-year, statewide moratorium on rent



PHOTO COURTESY OF TINA KOTEK

Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek

increases; and ending "no cause" evictions to provide more predictability for renters.

I.B.: Talk to us about mortgage interest deduction. As I understand it, it allows homeowners who itemize their taxes to deduct from their taxable income the interest paid on mortgages up to \$1 million. The deduction is expected to cost the state an estimated \$1 billion in forgone income tax revenue for the 2017-19 budget. In some cases, Oregonians are receiving a housing subsidy on their second and third homes. Given that so many people are facing a housing crisis – what's the answer?

T.K.: We are certainly in a crisis, so I believe every possible solution needs to be on the table. I would refer your readers to House Bill 2006, which reforms the mortgage interest deduction and allocates savings to affordable housing.

I.B.: What's the answer to solving our mental health crisis in Oregon?

T.K.: First and foremost, we have to protect our current investments in mental health services and substance abuse treatment during this difficult budget environment. That includes keeping people on the Oregon Health Plan so they can access mental health care. I support increasing the integration of mental health services in the Oregon Health Plan, as well as House Bill 2675, which requires mental health integration in community health improvement plans. Finally, I support Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer's work on requiring hospitals to improve their discharge procedures for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

I.B.: There's clearly an urban-rural divide in America. Oregon is no different. How do we collectively bridge the urban-rural divide?

T.K.: Here in Oregon, there's more that unites us than divides us – and I will try to focus on that.

We all want better schools, affordable health care, a strong economy, and good paying jobs. We'll debate the best way to achieve those goals, but we've got to keep communicating and figuring out ways to move the whole state forward

together. We can't succeed as a state if our rural communities are left behind, so I always keep that in mind.

I.B.: Is there legislation in the works to further protect undocumented immigrants in both sanctuary cities and communities throughout Oregon that may be more inclined to work with

the federal government and draconian policies under the current administration?

T.K.: We will not allow our immigrant neighbors to be criminalized, nor will we allow families to be cruelly torn apart. We stand strong with Oregon's immigrants and refugees and will use every tool at our disposal to protect them.

In fact, a few specific policies have already been introduced that will keep Oregon moving ahead on building an equitable state. Cover All Kids would extend the Oregon Health Plan to all children residing in Oregon, regardless of immigration status. The Reproductive Health Equity Act would improve access to reproductive care in several ways, including extending coverage to the 48,000 Oregonians who currently rely on emergency programs for their reproductive care.

I.B.: Anything I'm not asking?

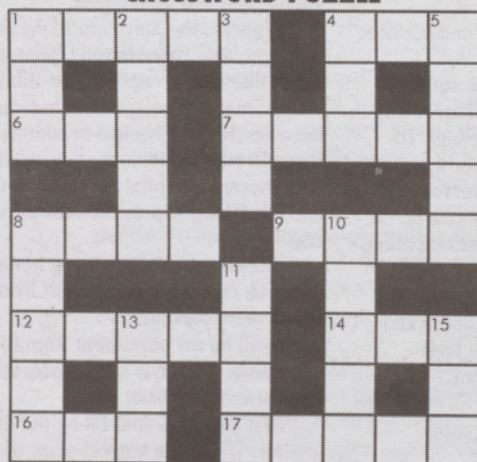
T.K.: I will continue working to make Oregon a state that ensures equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity in our neighborhoods, our schools and our places of work. To that end, this session we will

TINA KOTEK
OREGON HOUSE SPEAKER

be working on the next steps to reduce profiling and improve equal justice under the law.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who supports Street Roots – including all of the vendors – for everything you're doing to fight for social change.

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4. Have a bite
6. Tree fluid
7. Cake ingredient
8. Three-ply cookie
9. Hook's henchman
12. Ground grain
14. The gift of ____
16. Tease or ridicule
17. Francis or Kevin?

DOWN

1. Affirmative!
2. Type of fritter
3. Analyze or try
4. Cake ingredient
5. Tres
8. Deal
10. Potter's practice
11. Nosh!
13. Late rapper; abbr.
15. ____ appétit



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