

Teachers union pushes measures to up business taxes

Claims state funding is insufficient

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Education Association, a union representing 44,000 public school employees, plans to go to voters in 2018 in an effort to shore up more state funding for schools through a tax on businesses.

State legislators Thursday moved forward on a \$8.2 billion proposal to fund public K-12 education through the State School Fund for the next two years. That's about \$827 million more than the amount approved in the current two-year budget period.

Charging that state funding is insufficient in light of the state's relatively large classroom sizes and low graduation rates, the education association has proposed two ballot measures, both of which are planned for the ballot in November 2018.

They aim to leverage changes to the state's business tax structure to increase school funding.

One measure would change the legislative votes required to pass corporate tax increases.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Schools in Warrenton and across the state have struggled with infrastructure challenges. The Oregon Education Association is proposing ballot measures to tax businesses to help finance public education.

According to education association, if passed, it would allow the Legislature to raise corporate taxes to fund education by a simple majority vote, rather than the three-fifths majority required under current law. That change would be triggered if the Legislature puts forth a budget that does not meet the level of the Quality Education Model, a statewide bench-

mark for public school funding developed in the late 1990s.

The second measure — a proposal the groups are calling Invest in Oregon's Future — would lower individual income taxes while increasing taxes for large corporations by way of a gross receipts tax. The tax would be .95 percent for corporations with annual sales of more than \$5 million.

tion Association is now proposing, but Measure 97 would have imposed a higher rate that would have applied to fewer businesses. The education association was one of its supporters, along with other union groups.

A bitter battle unfolded last fall over Measure 97, and appears to have cast a pallor over business tax discussions in the ongoing legislative session, which is due to end in early July. Other proposals to change the state's business tax structure are still alive, but lawmakers have not made a decision yet.

Advocates for changing the tax structure, such as state Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, argue that switching from a state corporate income tax to a tax on business activities through gross sales receipts could introduce more stability to Oregon's volatile revenue system.

The effort to increase education funding also arises in the context of a \$1.4 billion gap between what the state expects to realize in revenue and the amount of money it would take to maintain all state services at current levels.

Drastic cuts

And some Democratic legislators argue that without raising new revenue, the

Legislature will have to make drastic cuts to fill the \$1.4 billion gap, such as narrowing the pool of people in Oregon who are eligible for Medicaid, the government's healthcare coverage for the poor. However, lawmakers are still discussing a health care provider tax that could cover a substantial amount of the state's Medicaid costs in the coming two-year budget.

Patrick Critser, president and CEO of the Tillamook County Creamery Association and chairman of the Oregon Business Plan, a group of businesses that have coalesced around state policy issues, told lawmakers Thursday that the group would be willing to support modifications to current taxes, rather than changing the overall business tax structure to one based on business sales in the current legislative session.

Meanwhile, two other local unions, SEIU 503 and Oregon's chapter of the Association of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees, announced plans this week to file a ballot measure to require publicly traded corporations to report Oregon taxes to the Secretary of State.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Cannon Beach Police Department tries new emergency message system

Emergency advisories now available via text message

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Residents of Cannon Beach will now have the option to receive text messages in an emergency thanks to a new message system facilitated by Cannon Beach Police Department.

The system, named Nixle, is a free information service that allows law enforcement, fire departments, municipal governments and other community agencies to send out text or email advisories.

While the service can be used to disseminate all kinds of advisories, Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said for now the plan is to use it for emergencies, such as extreme weather, traffic issues, missing persons cases, major crime or fraudulent business transactions. Those who want the alerts just need to create an account with Nixle and offer a phone number or email.

The Seaside Police Department and Clatsop County Emergency Management already use similar systems. More than 4,600 local municipalities have signed on to the program since its founding

in 2007, according to Nixle's website.

"Knowledge is key," Schermerhorn said. "If there is a bad traffic accident, and we get a Nixle message out to the public explaining the situation, it saves them a lot of stress, and saves our front office from answering phone calls to answer the same question over and over."

In the past, first responders ran into issues with mass communication during major storms, Schermerhorn said. Using this program will help spread hyperlocal alerts that maybe wouldn't make the radar of a general county emergency notification system.

Another useful application

Schermerhorn anticipates is the ability to inform businesses more quickly about any fraudulent checks or cash that enter the region.

"If we get reports of counterfeit in the county, we can alert business leaders here all at once instead of calling each business separately," Schermerhorn said.

For now, Lt. Chris Wilbur and administrative assistant Valerie Mannix will be in charge of distributing and managing these messages.

If residents want to sign up, Schermerhorn said they can find the link to do so on the Cannon Beach Police Department Facebook page or on the city's website.

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Toxic algae prompts advisory at Detroit Lake

Associated Press

SALEM — Officials have issued a health advisory for Detroit Lake in western Oregon.

The Oregon Health Authority issued the warning Friday after tests found toxin levels of blue-green algae that can be harmful to humans and animals.

Public health toxicologist David Farrer tells the Statesman Journal that the toxic bloom is in the Heater Creek arm of the reservoir located east of Salem.

Officials say visitors to the reservoir should avoid swallowing water while swimming, water skiing or powerboating.

Farrer says the health advisory covers the entire reservoir because the toxic bloom can move quickly to other areas of the reservoir.

MARIETTA VIRGILLO
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You came into my life on the first days of spring, and three months later, you were wearing my ring.

A June wedding we had, and you made me so glad.

Soon children we had at a comfortable pace, we added four total to God's human race.

As time passed us by, we lost our first son, the taking of him by water was done.

The three kids still living gave love to us all, it always was there for us, well into life's fall.

Marietta my wife and mother of four, her love always given to children and more, has gone to her rest and left us behind, is waiting in heaven for us still to find.

I know that one day my time will come due, and then I'll be with her again and her love oh so true.

I could never have done better when she came my way,

God gave me his best on our very first day!

Our 55 years have come and have gone, so happy you made me, still singing your song.

I'll love you forever, you know that I do, I'll love you forever, I swear that it's true!

Jim Virgillo

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