

# Brown lays out her goals for final term

Governor gives annual address

By AUBREY WIEBER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown wants the state to get ambitious about solving major challenges such as homelessness, challenging legislators on Monday in her State of the State address before hundreds of lawmakers, their families and the public in a packed state House chamber.

“For years we have struggled to overcome the impacts of recession on our state revenue, to build up adequate funding for our education system, and stabilize access to health care,” Brown said.

But now there is opportunity, she continued. The state is experiencing rapid growth. New jobs and ideas are being born daily. Some are thriving, but others have been negatively impacted by this period of prosperity, and Oregon has the means to step in.

Brown spoke on the opening day of the 2019 Legislature after she was sworn in for her final term as governor.

Before entering the chamber, Brown was preceded by former governors Ted Kulongsoski and Barbara Roberts, the Oregon leaders Brown has leaned on and praised most. The BRAVO Youth Orchestra filled the large hall with “Sir Duke” by Stevie Wonder.

Then Brown took to the floor and was sworn in by state Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha Lee Walters.

Her speech hit themes she carried on the campaign trail and underscored in her proposed state budget for the 2019-21 biennium. She offered little new as she rallied legislators to her cause.

Brown mostly received applause from the crowd, but at one point, after warning incoming legislators to prepare for the dirty side of politics, three people in the audience stood and shouted “stop the pipeline” before being removed.

She did key in on homelessness, asking for quick action out of the Capitol.

“Across Oregon, communities large and small are struggling with homelessness,” Brown said. “This crisis is playing out on our streets — and on our sidewalks.”

Brown asked lawmakers to quickly approve \$20 million in bonds to pay for 200 homes for the chronically homeless. While Brown was applauded at nearly every pause in her speech, this request received audible approval from only a handful of the more progressive members of the Legislature, such as state



Gov. Kate Brown is sworn in Monday by Martha Lee Walters, chief justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, during a ceremony at the Capitol.

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Gov. Kate Brown

Sen. Shemia Fagan, the new chairwoman of the Senate housing committee. Most lawmakers remained silent.

She endorsed legislation proposed by House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, and Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham, that caps rent increases each year at 7 percent for all rentals in Oregon.

“Oregon families are counting on us,” she said.

In a normal year, a huge education spending package, cap and trade or a plan to seriously tackle homelessness could define a legislative session. But in 2019, Brown is asking lawmakers to tackle all of them, and more, while passing new taxes to fund the new initiatives. On Monday, she worked to sell them on the aspirational path she’s outlined.

“The time is now. Our future is in front of us. We have to turn the corner and make it a reality,” Brown said in closing. “Together we can build a better Oregon.”

She also endorsed centralizing state contracts to give Oregon more leverage in negotiations. The idea came from Secretary of State Dennis Richardson. Richardson found in an audit released in December that a modernized system could have saved the state \$1.6 billion from 2015 to 2017.

Brown also leaned on Oregon’s youth to illustrate why lawmakers should back her goals. She talked about a card she received from 10-year-old Abner. On one side, the Portland

boy drew an Earth suffering from climate change.

“Hot, hot, hot” read the caption,” Brown said. “Europe was frowning.”

On the other side was a happy, healthy planet. He asked Brown what she planned to do about the climate.

Brown used it as an opening to talk about her progressive plan to combat climate change — something sure to be a focus for lawmakers.

She also brought up Jacob Burris, a 17-year-old from the Eugene area with a chronic health condition raised by a mother who waits tables to provide for him.

Access to the Oregon Health Plan has allowed Burris to thrive despite the challenges life has thrown at him, Brown said. He designs apparel for the Doernbecher Foundation.

Brown touted her work to expand the Oregon Health Plan to serve more adults and children. Giving them health care allows them to focus on other areas of their lives, she argued.

In 2019, Brown wants to continue that kind of work by supporting housing for the homeless, Medicaid funding, better funding schools and taking a strong stance on climate change. It’s all part of what she calls “future ready” — her plan to build the bedrock for the state to grow on for decades.

The two boys — Jacob and Abner — were in the chamber as Brown spoke.

“Today we have a choice. Are we willing to do the work to make the dream of a better Oregon come true?” she asked lawmakers. “We are. And Jacob’s story should serve as an inspiration to get this done.”

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