

# BUDGET

Continued from Page A8

This year, the state must now also pick up some of the tab for insuring additional Oregonians under the Oregon Health Plan, as a result of the Legislature's decision to expand coverage in 2014 under the Affordable Care Act — a decision Devlin and Nathanson said they stood by Thursday. The federal government covered the initial costs of implementation.

Devlin and Nathanson attributed the deficit to a "fundamental imbalance" caused

by these and other policies enacted in Oregon's past.

Measure 5 in 1990, for example, reduced property taxes and required local public schools to be funded by the state's general fund rather than by local taxes.

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, called the framework a "call to action."

"The fact that we face such a deficit during a booming economic period in our state demonstrates the need for comprehensive revenue reform," Burdick said.

She said legislators were looking for ways to maximize

the state's dollars but reiterated the need "to reform our revenue system to make sure it is fair to all Oregonians."

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland, said the state couldn't "afford to move backward."

"We can't afford to move backward in our investments in education, health care and critical services for struggling families," Williamson said in a statement. "We shouldn't shortchange our economic future by making it harder for students to get a good education. And I don't believe that any Oregonian wants us to make these painful cuts."

Jim Green, the head of the Oregon School Boards Association, called for both revenue and PERS reform in a statement Thursday.

"Our students need leadership on these two issues from the governor and our legislative leaders," Green said.

Republicans, however, generally praised the framework.

In a statement, Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem, also called the budget a "starting point."

"Now the work begins," Winters said. "We have our work cut out for us to craft a sound, sustainable budget (that) benefits Oregonians, ur-

ban and rural alike."

Sen. Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, said the budget the co-chairs presented was "based in reality."

"It's time Oregonians understood the consequences of explosive growth of government and overspending, coupled with anti-business climate and restrictive anti-land use laws," Ferrioli said. "The only way Oregon will get through the current budget crunch is by setting better spending priorities and demonstrating budget discipline."

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, who is also House

Republican Caucus Budget Chair, also framed the framework as an opportunity for "spending reform."

"This Legislature has an opportunity this session to finally address the structural deficits that led us to this position in the first place," Smith said, "and to put Oregon on the path to a more stable financial future."

The co-chairs said Thursday that the Joint Ways & Means committee plans to release recommendations for the 2017-19 state budget after the next state revenue forecasts, which is due to come out Feb. 22.

# BILL

Continued from Page A8

Others were the ACLU of Oregon, Asian-Pacific American Network of Oregon, Family Forward Oregon, NARAL Pro Choice Oregon, Oregon Latino Health Coalition and Western States Center, Swerdlow said. Sen. Monnes Anderson introduced similar legislation in 2015, though it did not include coverage for men, transgender individuals and undocumented immigrants.

Bipartisan opposition in the Senate, however, kept her bill from progressing to a vote, she said. Some senators felt covering abortions could be too controversial, Monnes Anderson said.

Gayle Atteberry, executive director of Oregon Right to Life, said the anti-abortion or-

ganization would oppose the new legislation.

"While Oregon Right to Life takes no position on true contraceptives, we, of course, are opposed to abortion, which always takes the life of an innocent unborn child," Atteberry said in an email. "Because of the abortion component, ORTL is opposed to (the bill)."

Atteberry's comment raises the question of whether including abortion could sink the bill and doom other benefits such as coverage of birth control without a copayment.

"I believe that this year there will be much more pressure to pass this important bill," said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland. "I believe that events at the national level will add to that pressure."

The bill's proponents, including Rep. Barker, said they believe a majority of Orego-

nians will support coverage of abortion. The Legislature also has a Democratic majority.

"This is a bill sponsored by two Democrats, and Democrats are in charge" noted Rep. Sherrie Stenger, R-Scio, who sponsored an unsuccessful bill last year to ban sex-selective abortions. "That is probably the most salient point in this conversation."

Lawmakers will consider the proposal during their session, which kicks off Feb. 1.

Since 2014, California, Illinois, Maryland and Vermont have passed laws adopting the Affordable Care Act's mandate to cover contraceptives without a patient copayment and expanded on the federal law's provisions. Democratic lawmakers in Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota and New York have proposed similar measures this year.

# AUDIT

Continued from Page A8

The Capital Bureau was first to report that the management review's scope of work did not address how much weight ODOT employees give conflicts of interest in the process choosing contractors.

The redactions and the additional information

West requested were not yet complete, West said.

The preliminary findings are scheduled to be wrapped up by Feb. 1, he said.

Staff members at the Department of Administrative Services then will develop McKinsey's findings and list of options into a set of recommendations, West said.

The final report is set

to be complete Feb. 28, he said.

"The most important thing I would like to say is DAS has really taken a hands-off approach to the findings themselves," said West, who is married to an ODOT employee. "We think McKinsey and their work is high quality, and we don't want any perception that DAS has influenced the findings."

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