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503-588-2800

800-578-6722

info@osba.org

Revenue reform remains an elusive goal in Oregon

By GORDON OLIVER

When it comes to paying for public schools, Oregon has been in a 26-year funk, and is still searching for a clear revenue reform strategy for getting on track.

That's not news to anyone who works in education or to parents who live with crowded classrooms, endless activity fees and school fundraisers, and short school calendars. The trouble is, since voters approved the tax-cutting Measure 5 initiative in 1990 and other tax limitations in later years, the stars have never aligned politically for a broad-based financial restructuring of Oregon school funding.

While biennial battles in Salem have produced some recent funding boosts, Oregon isn't even close to providing the money that the state's own analysts say is needed to provide essential education services. Between 1990 and 2015, Oregon has dropped from 15th place to 31st among states in education spending.

Some longtime education leaders have had enough.

"Because of how school funding has evolved with ballot measures, court rulings and PERS, you've got a hodgepodge and a big mess, and you have to have leadership to pull it into a rational system," said **Dr. Doug Nelson**, OSBA president. "It's not very rational right now."

Nelson appointed an OSBA workgroup examining funding reform options. It is being chaired by **Betty Reynolds**, OSBA president-elect, and member of the West Linn-Wilsonville School Board.

State Sen. Mark Hass, a longtime champion for more stable state school funding, likes to pop out his smart phone to show Oregon's General Fund matched against a mountain range, to accentuate the ever-changing peaks and valleys.

"When I look at the last 20 years, I wonder how we were able to keep the doors open at all," said Hass, a Beaverton Democrat.

Hass notes that the funding gyrations are traumatic for staff and students in ways often unseen. Educators lose

their jobs mid-career due to layoffs, triggering a chaotic round of bumping by remaining teachers and overcrowded classrooms before new, less-experienced teachers arrive when budgets rebound.



State Sen. Mark Hass likes to use this image to show fluctuations in Oregon's General Fund revenue since the late 1990s.

The Legislature's quarter-century inability to unify behind a school finance fix has opened the door to yet another tax-related initiative, this one on the Nov. 8 ballot. Measure 97 (see related article) would raise an estimated \$3 billion annually through taxes on large corporations.

The measure has divided those who support more stable and robust education funding. Schools would tend to benefit from the state's new tax, if passed, but a recent state legal analysis indicates that the Legislature can spend the funds as it chooses.

OSBA has taken a neutral position on the measure, and is set to launch a statewide discussion of ideas for comprehensive school finance reform, regardless of whether voters approve Measure 97.

Its Revenue Reform Advisory Workgroup has prepared a set of potential options for the Legislature to consider in next year's session. The workgroup's draft report is being presented for discussion and suggestions in meetings around the state this fall and at OSBA's Annual Convention Nov. 10-13.

<https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?ik=39412626>

Jim Green, OSBA's deputy executive director, has worked closely with the revenue reform workgroup. He

expects to find a wide range of opinions among elected school board members regarding fixes to school financing.

If Measure 97 passes, he said, education leaders may want to advocate for levels that would meet the baseline for adequate funding outlined in Oregon's Quality Education Model (see related article). If the corporate tax measure fails, "we as school board members and OSBA need to be leaders on this," Green said. "We have dealt with budget cuts for much too long."

Schools lose in tax revolt

In 1990, Oregonians voted to blow up the state's tax system, which has always relied heavily on property and income taxes.

Measure 5 introduced property tax rate limits that, when fully implemented in 1995-96, cut rates an average of 51 percent from 1990-91 levels, according to a state Department of Revenue analysis. Measure 50, passed in 1997, introduced limits on growth of assessed property values. It replaced most tax levies with permanent tax rates, a fundamental transformation of the state's tax system. Measure 50 cut tax rates by an average of 11 percent.

Under both measures, the state was required to compensate schools for their revenue losses.

"In both cases, the effect of the requirement was negligible, because the Legislature appropriated more than the required amount each biennium," the Department of Revenue said in a 2009 history of Oregon's post-Measure 5 tax system. But, the report noted, some of that money came from reductions in other state school support funds that were no longer mandated.

The law's limits on local tax rates made it difficult or impossible for local schools to turn to their voters for increased funding to deal with specific local needs or rapid population growth. And the most recent economic downturn later triggered deep cuts in state funding for schools as personal income tax revenue diminished.

Schools have not yet recovered from the recession-era cuts, despite recent state funding increases. Consider this: Before Measure 5 and Measure 50, Oregon's education funding was 6 percent above the national average, according to a state Quality Education Commission report. Today, that funding is about 11 percent lower than the national average.

State revenue now covers about 70 percent of costs for Oregon school districts. The Legislature has increased funding levels significantly in the last two biennia, with education spending of \$7.4 billion in the current biennium.

The recent increases have eased some immediate pain, but they've sidestepped hard discussions about how to stabilize state school funding through good times and bad. Complicating matters is a state law, established by referendum in 1997, requiring a three-fifths vote to create or raise any state taxes.

The state's Quality Education Commission, created by the Legislature in 1991, was Oregon's attempt to at least

quantify the scope of the funding problem in response to a voter mandate to fully fund education. Each biennium, the commission calculates just how much money is needed to meet what it calls a Quality Education Model for K-12 schools. The commission estimates a funding need in the 2017-19 biennium of \$9.97 billion, almost \$2 billion more than the expected inflationary adjustment needed to maintain current service levels.

It's a big gap. And it is unclear if Measure 97 passes how much money would actually go to schools.

Hass, the Beaverton state senator, is not supporting the measure, but expects that if it passes, "a caliphate of 10,000 lobbyists will come in with their stories."

Possible funding models

Of course, it's easier to identify a problem than to find a solution. Even in a state where one political party dominates the statehouse and the Legislature, and where the public says that education funding should be the state's top priority, consensus has been as vaporous as a rain cloud.

There's no lack of ideas for a better funding formula, but all contain potential pitfalls that could be their undoing in terms of public acceptance, legality or adequacy of revenue. And, as Sen. Hass notes, states that have been most successful in steadying school funding are those that do not allow voter initiatives to create laws outside the legislative process.

The OSBA Revenue Reform Advisory Workgroup has examined some of the key proposals advanced in recent years. It recommends that any new source should generate \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion per biennium in new funding dedicated to public schools, and says that a new funding source should have broad support from school boards and other community organizations.

Funding should also be at a level necessary "to provide the type of education our public school students deserve," the draft report says.

One possibility is for the state to amend the language of its constitutional requirement to fund schools at the level called for in the Quality Education Model. Under Ballot Measure 1, passed in 2000, and a subsequent court decision, the Legislature has to either fund at the QEM level or write a report explaining why it cannot do so.

Effectively, writing such a report gets the Legislature off the hook for full education funding, and that is what it has always done. Eliminating that "out" would immediately pressure the Legislature to provide adequate funding for schools.

Yet education advocates need look no further than north to Washington, which has a similar funding requirement the Legislature has been unwilling or unable to meet, to see the tangle of litigation that can result from such a mandate.

Others are also looking for comprehensive solutions. Here are some of the ideas that have surfaced in recent years, which were examined by the OSBA workgroup:

- **The “Hass Plan”** – Sen. Hass has called for Oregon to enact a Commercial Activity Tax (CAT) similar to one recently adopted in Ohio. Unlike Measure 97’s high tax rate targeting a relatively small number of businesses, this proposal favors a relatively low tax paid by a large number of businesses.
- **Property tax reform measures** – Possibilities include resetting the value of property at the time of sale; replacing the current 3 percent maximum increase in assessed property values with a variable rate of 1.5 to 6 percent, based on property types; allowing local option levies outside limits imposed by Ballot Measure 5; or basing property taxes on real market value, but with a limit of perhaps 8 percent on annual tax increases.
- **Sales or gross receipt tax** – No tax discussion is complete without consideration of a sales tax, or the fact that Oregon voters have rejected sales tax proposals nine times.
- **Kicker reform** – The 2 percent surplus kicker, embedded in Oregon’s Constitution, gives taxpayers an income tax refund or credit if actual revenues for the biennium are more than 2 percent higher than forecast at the time the budget was adopted. OSBA has long supported redirecting those funds into a “Rainy Day fund” for public schools available when Oregon’s economy takes a downturn.
- **The “Superintendents’ Proposal”** – A proposal floated by some school district superintendents during the 2016 session would have amended the Oregon Constitution to require the Legislature to spend not less than 33 percent of the legislatively approved budget on education and public safety. The measure did not receive a hearing during the session.
- **The Karen Minnis Plan** – Then-House Speaker Karen Minnis proposed in 2005 what she called the “Stable Schools Funding Plan.” The plan would have dedicated 51 percent of personal income taxes to schools. If taxes grow faster than 9 percent in the two-year budget cycle, the extra would go to school-improvement grants and a rainy-day fund to protect schools in an economic downturn.

The Revenue Reform Advisory Workgroup report will go to the full OSBA Board in November for final action.

Oregon Public Broadcasting coverage on school funding challenges:

- www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-education-measure-5
- www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-constitution-change-force-school-funding/

Measure 97: Schools solution or regressive tax?

By CONNIE POTTER

Is Measure 97 a solution to a nearly three-decades-old funding problem for Oregon schools or a blank check to state legislators?

Both sides are ramping up for a contentious and expensive effort to persuade voters in November about the controversial proposal, which would impose a gross receipts tax on large corporations. If approved, Measure 97 is expected to raise about \$3 billion per year in additional funding for Oregon schools, health care and senior services.

The campaign, expected to be one of the most spendy in Oregon history, has already generated more than \$9.5 million in donations to fight it; supporters have raised over \$2 million.

Gov. Kate Brown and other supporters – including former governors Barbara Roberts and Ted Kulongoski – say the measure is a long-awaited and viable solution to finally funding K-12 education at the level needed to maintain high-quality schools.

Opponents contend the measure is not constitutionally binding and that legislators could allocate funds however they want. Approving Measure 97 would be like “writing a blank check to Salem,” said Rebecca Tweed, statewide campaign coordinator for the Defeat The Tax on Oregon Sales campaign.

Underscoring that concern, the state Office of the Legislative Counsel issued a report Aug. 30 stating that about \$250 million of the annual revenues would have to be dedicated to the state Highway Fund. That is because Oregon has a constitutional provision requiring that taxes generated from motor fuels be used for highway projects. The \$250 million is the amount that state officials estimate could be generated by transportation-related sales at gas stations, convenience stores and other locations.

Katherine Driessen, spokeswoman for the proponents, Our Oregon, acknowledged that the courts may need to weigh in, but said that doesn’t change the measure’s overall positive impact. Additional revenues are desperately needed for schools and social services, she said, and Measure 97 could make the difference.

The OSBA Board of Directors has taken a neutral position on the measure, largely because the proposal doesn’t guarantee any funds specifically for education, said Jim Green, OSBA’s deputy executive director.

“They would like to see comprehensive revenue reform,” Green said. “They don’t want to oppose, but this didn’t meet their criteria for support.”

Measure 97 would levy a 2.5 percent gross receipts tax on large corporations that have Oregon sales of more than \$25 million. For the 230 Oregon-based corporations that are subject to the new tax, their annual tax bill would jump from an average of \$200,000 to \$2.2 million, according to a report by Oregon’s Office of Economic Analysis. Businesses would be required to pay the tax on

their total revenues, regardless of whether they make a profit.

That would result in a ripple effect, where companies of all sizes would have to raise prices and lay off workers, said Jeremy Rogers, vice president of the Oregon Business Council. He said the measure would add a new tax at each step in the production process for many products. An item could be taxed multiple times as it goes from a manufacturer to a distributor and then to a retailer. Ultimately, consumers would end up paying hundreds of dollars per year in higher prices on gasoline, utilities and other purchases, he said.

"The impacts will be hardest on low-income Oregonians," Rogers said. "If you think about things sold in largest quantities – food, gas, electricity – those are services subject to the highest amount of tax. Low-income people spend the highest amount of income on those things, so it will have a disproportionate impact on (them)."

Driessen counters that large companies such as Bank of America, Comcast and Wal-Mart make hundreds of millions of dollars in Oregon, but pay among the lowest taxes in the nation.

Impacts of the measure have been analyzed by the state's Legislative Revenue Office (LRO) and by Northwest Economic Research Center (NERC) at Portland State University. The LRO report was requested by state lawmakers to determine how the tax would affect Oregon's economy. The NERC report was funded by Our Oregon, the driving force behind the measure.

The two studies align in a number of areas, but offer different estimates of private and public sector job impacts. The LRO study estimated that the tax would cost 38,200 private-sector jobs while increasing government employment by 17,700 jobs. In contrast, NERC anticipates a loss of 13,000 private-sector jobs, with an increase of more than 30,000 public-sector positions.

For Otto Schell, legislative advocate for Oregon PTA, the only argument that carries weight is that it's past time to adequately fund public schools. He cites this evidence: Oregon has one of the shortest school years in the nation and some of the largest class sizes. Because of layoffs, Oregon has 2,000 fewer teachers today than in 2008, even though enrollment has gone up.

Voters can't keep waiting for a more perfect solution, he said.

"Parents and people who deal with education are tired of waiting and are ready for a real investment in schools," Schell said. "My board said this is exactly the kind of game-changing action we've been waiting for."

He said the \$3 billion in annual revenue generated by the tax could fill Oregon's K-12 funding gap in one fell swoop.

PTA members were among 6,000 volunteers who gathered signatures to put the measure on the ballot, and Schell said they'll be making phone calls and going door-to-door to generate voter support.

"We have a pretty amazing grass-roots campaign," he said. "We will never be able to match those gigantic corporations in terms of funding, but we think we'll be able to win the day in November."

Opponents want to make sure they don't.

"It's the largest tax increase in Oregon history, and there's no guarantee for where that money will go," said Tweed, spokeswoman for the opposition. "That's quite an ask and quite a risk for Oregonians to take."

Quality Education Model shows longstanding shortfall

The message of the latest Quality Education Model hasn't changed much since the first QEM report was published more than a dozen years ago: Lack of adequate funding remains the biggest challenge for K-12 schools.

The lack of progress in closing the funding gap is frustrating, said Brian Reeder, Oregon Department of Education (ODE) assistant superintendent, but demonstrates a major point of the report. Without revenue reform, it's going to be difficult to get the high educational outcomes that Oregonians expect.

The QEM report is produced every two years by the Quality Education Commission. The commission was established by the Legislature in 1999 to determine the amount of funding needed to meet the state's education goals.

The report will be a foundation for education advocates to urge the Legislature to buoy support for schools in the upcoming legislative session.

Before the 2015 session, the QEM estimated the funding gap for K-12 schools at \$2.38 billion. However, the Legislature appropriated more money than expected, narrowing the gap to \$1.78 billion. For the 2017-19 biennium, the gap is estimated to grow to \$1.99 billion. The \$210 million increase is due entirely to the expected increase in the employer contribution rate for the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

With the ongoing focus on schools and funding, the timing may be ripe for the Legislature to take the QEM report to heart, said Mary Alice Russell, a commission member and superintendent of the McMinnville School District.

"I think people really want to do what's right for students and K-12 schools," she said. "Oregon schools have been underfunded. If we want to provide quality opportunities for students, we need more resources."

According to the report, inflation-adjusted funding for schools has been flat for 25 years, yet expectations for students keep growing. Education funding in Oregon continues to be about 11 percent below the national average. That is a dramatic decline from 1990 (before passage of Measure 5 and 50 property tax limitations) when Oregon stood 6 percent above the national average.

Rather than point fingers of blame, the report's aim is to provide insight into how money is spent and the expected benefits from funding different initiatives, said Reeder. For example, how much would it cost to reduce class sizes in the early grades and what would the benefits be relative to the cost?

"The real hope of the commission is that the Legislature will look at this," Reeder said. "If we don't have enough money for the entire package, where will we get the most bang for the buck?"

Among the bright spots in the report is that Oregon's high school graduation rate is steadily inching higher. It rose to 74 percent in 2014-15, up from 68 percent in 2008-09. The report outlined recent analysis by ODE that could help in developing policies to increase graduation rates. But again, funding is critical, said Russell.

"Often leaders in the state ask questions such as why the graduation rate is not where we want it to be," she said. "Then we look at the number of days schools are in session and funded and see that we have one of the shortest school years in the nation."

Recommendations outlined in the QEM report (see in full at www.ode.state.or.us/wma/research2016-quality-education-model-final-report--revised.pdf):

- The Legislature should appropriate at least \$9.1 billion to the State School Fund in 2017-19. The Legislature should also increase spending for high-quality pre-K programs.
- The Legislature should take action to raise more revenue.
- Schools must start early to assure that all students read at grade level by third grade. The state should continue the investment it has made in pre-K programs and full-day kindergarten.
- The state must increase its understanding of the social, economic and cultural factors that impact students, so it can allocate resources and develop strategies that help districts improve the achievement of specific student groups: students in the early grades, where literacy development is critical to later learning; English Language Learners, whose high school graduation rates soar if they are proficient in English before entering high school; economically disadvantaged students, who face challenges both inside and outside the classroom; male students, who graduate at lower rates than females with similar academic achievement; and Native American students, who face exceptional challenges.
- Schools must provide more individualized instruction time, particularly for struggling students.
- The Quality Education Commission, ODE and other partners should continue evaluating practices that promote college readiness and success in post-secondary programs and to tell the stories of successful schools.

Resources are available to help combat child sexual abuse

As students headed back to school this month, staff at one Oregon high school were in the classroom themselves for training on child sexual abuse prevention.

It's a topic no one likes to think is relevant to them, but statistics say otherwise, says Maria Ross, prevention specialist with ABC House in Albany, one of 21 non-profit child abuse prevention centers in Oregon.

"These problems historically are very shrouded in secrecy and silence," Ross said. "Every school and every community is dealing with these types of incidents, but we often don't know about them. This is one of those times when we know about them."

The training at Philomath, for both licensed and classified staff, is in

response to a hazing incident reported at a football team summer camp in July. Since then, criminal citations were issued against six players and a volunteer coach.

The curriculum was developed by Darkness to Light, a national non-profit organization. Its mission is to educate adults to prevent and recognize child abuse and react responsibly to reports of inappropriate behavior.

Other training programs are also available for Oregon schools. Safe Schools, offered through the Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) insurance pool, provides online training opportunities for staff on a variety of topics, including bullying, hazing and child abuse.

OSBA staff, upon request, will also provide on-site training around these issues, said Lisa Freiley, OSBA staff counsel and administrator of the PACE program. Such requests should be sent to lfreiley@osba.org.

Districts need to take these issues seriously, Freiley said, not only because of potential legal liability but also to make sure students are protected.

"We have a duty to supervise kids and make sure all kids have a safe place to be," she said. "We are also responsible for teaching students what behaviors are and are not appropriate and encouraging them to report situations that are not safe. When administrators hear about inappropriate behaviors, it is imperative an investigation take place."

Districts also are concerned about the financial impact of sex abuse accusations. An independent investigation



alone can cost up to \$5,000, said Jens Jensen, property casualty claims manager for PACE. If litigation ensues, the cost to defend an allegation can be as much as \$100,000 and considerably higher if the case goes to trial, he said.

"We find taking a proactive approach to these situations is best for several reasons," said Jensen. "Not only is there a financial exposure to the school district, but to the risk pool as well."

OSBA put together a Boundary Invasion Toolkit for districts last year to try to reduce the frequency of sex-abuse cases, said Jensen. The toolkits provide a packet of materials designed to identify and prevent sexual abuse before it takes place between school employees and students. A copy of the toolkit is available on the PACE website.

The topic of sexual abuse prevention is a priority for the Ford Family Foundation. The organization is funding three-year renewal grants to 11 nonprofits in 16 counties in Oregon and northern California to train adults in the Darkness to Light curriculum.

There's a sense of urgency fueled by some staggering statistics, said Mary Beattie, program coordinator for the foundation's child prevention initiative.

- Over 10,000 Oregon children were confirmed victims of abuse in 2013, nearly half under the age of 6.
- There were almost 28,000 investigations of suspected child abuse in Oregon in 2013. More than twice as many reports of suspected abuse were made in the same year.
- Child sexual abuse victims are more likely to drop out of school, experience more teen pregnancies, depression and even suicide.

"People will say, 'I don't know anyone who has been abused,'" Beattie said, "but the person next to you says, 'Yes, you do.'"

Crook County School District offered the Darkness to Light training to staff last year. Oregon City, Coos Bay and Jefferson County are among districts offering the training as part of their staff inservice activities this fall.

The goal is to create a network of people working to prevent child abuse, said Beattie. Ford Foundation hopes to train more than 20,000 people by March 2018, plus prepare more than 100 facilitators to carry on the training in their own communities.

"We know it's prevalent and how devastating it is," said Beattie. "This is a way to mobilize folks and really start looking at our youth protection policies."

Darkness to Light encourages every community to educate 5 percent of its population about child abuse prevention, which will provide a foundation for widespread social change. They say this will create tipping points, which occur when issues gain momentum and a relatively small amount of people can effect change on a societal level.

The two-hour curriculum includes survivor stories, guidance from experts and practical solutions that adults can adopt to protect children in their community, said Beattie. It outlines five steps:

1. **Learn the facts.** One in 10 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18.
2. **Minimize opportunity.** More than 80 percent of sexual abuse cases occur in isolated, one-on-one situations.
3. **Talk about it.** Children often keep abuse a secret. Talk openly with them to prevent sexual abuse.
4. **Recognize the signs.** Often the signs are emotional or behavioral, not physical.
5. **React responsibly.** Learn how to offer support and report suspicion or discovery immediately.

While the training is focused on child sexual abuse prevention, many of the principles and strategies are applicable to other problems impacting youth, including bullying and hazing, said ABC House's Ross. For instance, guidance for making one-on-one situations safer include making encounters between adults and youth more observable and interruptible.

A large part of the training is about handling disclosures and how to respond if a student reveals instances of inappropriate behavior. Ross said the adults should assure the student that they believe him or her, that it's not their fault and not ask too many questions or leading questions.

First Responder Appreciation Day is Tuesday, Sept. 27

Simple acts of gratitude will be the name of the game on Tuesday, Sept. 27, designated in Oregon as First Responder Appreciation Day.

The annual event recognizes police officers, firefighters and others who are the first on the scene when emergencies happen.

"If people just show simple acts of gratitude, we can make sure they know we appreciate what they are doing," said Tori Hittner of the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police. "We understand that our police officers and firefighters are making huge sacrifices every day, and their families are making huge sacrifices, to help our communities operate the way they do."

For schools, those simple acts of gratitude might be students writing thank-you letters or drawing art work to give to local firefighters and police officers. Businesses might post thank-you signs in their store windows, Hittner said.

"We just want to let first responders know that we care," she said.

Oregon legislators first declared First Responder Appreciation Day in 2013, saying:

- First responders risk their safety and personal property on a daily basis in the execution of their duty to protect the public.
- First responders are the first line of defense for the public against threats, domestic and foreign.
- First responders stand ready 24 hours per day to come to the aid of citizens of the United States of America.
- First responders are a vital part of our communities, not only responding to emergencies but also volunteering in our schools and community organizations.
- First responders who are volunteers or employees of agencies that provide public safety services, including policing, fire protection, emergency medical services and search and rescue services, come together during emergencies to serve the public.
- The state of Oregon wishes to honor and support first responders with an annual day of appreciation.

Strategies can help address election-related angst in schools

By CONNIE POTTER

Educators typically love presidential election years because they offer rich opportunities for teaching about civics and the election process. But this year is different, says Rob Larson, director of Oregon Leadership Network (OLN).

Many teachers are wary – and even fearful – of talking with students about an election that is as inflammatory and polarizing as this one. Districts are also uneasy about the prospect of student protests, similar to the walkout last spring at Forest Grove High School.

What to do?

OLN – a statewide network of school districts and others committed to equity in schools – gathered its state steering committee in early September to share insights and mull strategies. By sharing experiences, they said, districts can be proactive, learn together and find ways to promote both equity and civility in their schools.

The bottom line, Larson said, is that educators have an obligation to keep schools safe for students, both physically and emotionally.

“If students feel like they are being bullied or harassed, they can’t learn well because of the fear and anxiety and loss of sleep,” he said.

While it might be tempting to try to ignore all the campaign rhetoric, that’s not realistic, said Larson.

“This is happening across the state,” he said. “Every family in the state that has a television is hearing this language. Kids are hearing parents and family members argue about it.”

It’s important to give teachers guidance in how to have thoughtful classroom discussions while supporting students who feel threatened, he said. Schools also must balance the constitutional right to free speech with making sure students are not being offended, he added.



Rob Larson

The walkout at Forest Grove High School last spring – triggered by two students hanging a “Build A Wall” sign in the cafeteria – ultimately became a constructive learning opportunity, where students demonstrated peacefully and engaged in respectful dialogue, said Larson.

“It became a positive thing, but that did not happen by accident,” he said. “It happened because the district has been working for a long time on equity. The district was prepared to handle the circumstances the way they handled it.”

Larson believes districts need to have a level of readiness so they can be prepared if similar protests happen in their communities. OLN offers a place to have that conversation, he said, and for districts to share what is actually happening in their buildings and the strategies they are employing to deal with it.

There are a number of good resources available to help schools navigate sensitive election topics, said Larson, and OLN will continue to share them on its blog (<http://educationnorthwest.org/oln>). Here are a few:

- To create safe and supportive environments in the context of this year’s presidential election, visit Election 2016 Resources, which is part of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project. (www.tolerance.org/election2016)
- The American Reading Company called on teachers, principals, superintendents and administrators to share social justice and literacy resources that can be helpful when addressing free speech in the context of offensive and racialized issues. (http://resources.americanreading.com/category/talking-about-racial-justice/#.V8cly_krLGh)
- In a guest blog post titled “Anti-Racist School System Leadership,” Josh Starr, CEO of Phi Delta Kappa International and former teacher and superintendent, provides practical steps for education leaders to confront institutional racism. (www.justinccohen.com/blog/2016/7/8/guest-post-josh-starr-on-anti-racist-school-system-leadership)

- In Oregon, the Classroom Law Project: Teaching Youth Participation in Democracy is again offering statewide, school-based election season workshops. (www.classroomlaw.org; www.classroomlaw.org/files/elections-lessons-3016-flyer.pdf)
- Earlier this year, the Region X Equity Assistance Center published two guides that can be used to advance equitable practices to support all students:
 - Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably (<http://educationnorthwest.org/resources/culturally-responsive-teaching-guide-evidence-based-practices-teaching-all-students>)
 - Fostering a Safe and Bias-Free Learning Environment: A Guide for Educators (<http://educationnorthwest.org/resources/fostering-safe-and-bias-free-learning-environment-guide-educators>)

In the Loop

Three OSBA efforts aligning as 2017 session approaches

As we look toward the 2017 legislative session, three separate OSBA-led initiatives are creating momentum toward resolving the decades-old issue of adequately funding Oregon’s public schools.



Betsy Miller-Jones
Executive Director

Ever since Measure 5’s passage in 1990, the school funding picture in this state has been in a shambles. But this week, and in the months ahead, you are going to hear a lot about the vision that Oregonians have for their schools, and a potential path for all of us to achieve that vision.

The three initiatives that are coming together are “The Promise of Oregon” campaign, a public awareness campaign that is now in its third year; “Oregon Rising,” a joint campaign between OSBA, the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and the Oregon Education Association; and the broad issue of revenue reform, which is being addressed by an OSBA Revenue Reform Advisory Workgroup (its draft report can be seen at www.osba.org/~media/Files/Event%20Materials/other/Advisory%20Committee%20Executive%20Summary-rev%209-13-16%20FINAL.pdf).

At the same time these issues are aligning, all of you will no doubt have heard about Measure 97, the corporate tax measure on the Nov. 8 ballot that is likely to become the most expensive ballot measure in this state’s history. Whether that measure passes or not (our OSBA Board has voted to remain neutral on the measure), we believe that this state needs a comprehensive plan for revenue

reform. And so, through our Fall Regionals and other means (see an in-depth article in this issue of *School Leader News*), OSBA is going to continue to advocate toward that end.

Later this week you are going to be hearing a lot about Oregon Rising, and in particular the results of an unprecedented survey that relied on input from more than 10,000 Oregonians. Through that survey, we asked Oregonians to share their vision for schools, without regards to the costs.

This is what they told us: They want a well-rounded education for their children. They want more electives. They want demanding offerings in the arts, and math, science, tech and engineering. They want vocational education. They want students to learn new languages. And they want smaller class sizes and more personal attention to students.

As it turns out, those survey results show a clear alignment between what the public wants for our schools and the needs identified by the nonpartisan Quality Education Commission. Through the commission’s work, we also know in a broad sense what the funding gap is to achieve that vision — about \$2 billion.

We expect that this Oregon Rising report will continue to rally momentum around fully funding our schools, and we will also continue to use the Promise campaign to both celebrate our students and demonstrate the need to invest in their education. OSBA’s revenue reform report and advocacy efforts in 2017 will directly address fair, sustainable methods to pay for the schools our children need, and deserve.

OSBA is counting on the support of you, our members, as we move these initiatives forward into 2017 and communicate these important messages to our state legislators and other government leaders.

Seaside visit kicks off annual Fall Regional meetings around Oregon

OSBA’s Fall Regionals continue this week and run through Oct. 25.

The annual meetings with members around the state debuted Sept. 15 in Seaside, and conclude Oct. 25 in Paisley. This week includes visits to The Dalles (Monday), Condon (Tuesday), Pendleton (Wednesday) and Clackamas and Enterprise (Thursday).

Agendas for this year’s meetings include discussion of upcoming ballot measures, revenue reform, “The Promise of Oregon” and “Oregon Rising” campaigns, and legislative priorities for 2017.



2016 Fall Regional Meetings Schedule

Date/Day	City	Counties
Sept. 27, Tuesday	Condon	Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler
Sept. 28, Wednesday	Pendleton	Morrow, Umatilla
Sept. 29, Thursday	Clackamas	Clackamas
Sept. 29, Thursday	Enterprise	Wallowa
Oct. 3, Monday	Portland	Multnomah
Oct. 3, Monday	La Grande	Union, Baker
Oct. 4, Tuesday	Prairie City	Grant
Oct. 5, Wednesday	Burns	Harney
Oct. 6, Thursday	Vale	Malheur
Oct. 11, Tuesday	Eugene	Lane
Oct. 17, Monday	Salem	Marion, Polk, Yamhill
Oct. 17, Monday	Bandon	Coos, Curry
Oct. 18, Tuesday	Roseburg	Douglas
Oct. 24, Monday	Medford	Jackson, Josephine, Klamath
Oct. 25, Tuesday	Paisley	Lake

OSBA Board nomination deadline approaching Sept. 30

The deadline is looming this week for nominations for 10 positions on the OSBA Board of Directors. Member boards may also submit resolutions for a vote by the membership.

Open positions are 1 (Eastern), 2 (Gorge), 5 (Southern), 7 (Clackamas), 9 (Douglas/South Coast), 11 (Marion), 13 (Yamhill/Polk), 15 (Washington), 17 (Multnomah) and 19 (Multnomah). Candidate nomination materials and any resolutions are due in OSBA offices by 5 p.m. Sept. 30. All terms are for two years, except position 2, which is for one year.

Board members interested in running for a position on the OSBA Board need to be nominated by a member board within their region. Nominations require official board action. Sample language is available to assist in making a motion or resolution to stand for election to the OSBA Board.

Local board members can meet candidates for their region by attending Fall Regionals being scheduled throughout the state. All candidates are invited to speak at their area’s regional meeting, giving OSBA members an opportunity to get to know the people who want to represent them.

Election materials and a calendar can be found at: www.osba.org/About%20OSBA/LeftNav/Election_Center.aspx

Time is short to save on OSBA Annual Convention registration

Just a couple of weeks are left to save with early-bird registration for OSBA’s 70th Annual Convention Nov. 10-13 in downtown Portland.

The conference theme this year is “Embracing The Promise of Oregon: Let’s Dream Bigger Together.”

Keynote speakers include inspirational speaker Chad Hymas, researcher and professor Pedro Noguera, and Umatilla SD Superintendent Heidi Sipe. This year’s Critical Issues Breakfast speaker is Colt Gill, Oregon’s first education innovation officer.

New board members elected since Dec. 1, 2015, receive a significant discount – it’s only \$75 total to register. All others receive \$50 off registration fees through Oct. 7.

Registration materials can be found at www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Annual_Convention-2016.aspx?page=text

Questions? Contact our event staff at info@osba.org or 800-578-6722.

