



*from the office of the*

## OREGON SENATE REPUBLICANS

### PRESS RELEASE

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### **Senate Republicans Demand Legislature Refocus Priorities**

*School reopenings, vaccines, and economic recovery must be top of the list*

SALEM, Ore. – The Senate Republican Caucus is demanding that Democrat leaders bring an increased sense of urgency and focus to the biggest issues facing Oregonians.

Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod (Lyons) issued the following statement:

“Throughout the pandemic, the Legislature has abdicated too much responsibility to the Governor. We cannot sit by and watch the Governor fail to deliver on the biggest issues facing Oregonians today. It’s time to take some of the responsibility and get to work on the issues that matter most to Oregonians. We are demanding legislation aimed at school reopenings, vaccine distribution, economic recovery, and government accountability be moved to the top of the priority list.”

Students are suffering from school closures. Seniors, as well as rural Oregonians, are being failed by an abysmal vaccine rollout. Working families are struggling to make ends meet.

For these reasons, Senate Republicans are standing in solidarity with them by staging a protest and invoking First Amendment rights.

### **REOPEN SCHOOLS NOW**

EIGHTY PERCENT of Oregon’s students last week remained out of the classroom. This flies in the face of increasing evidence. The CDC has recognized that school reopenings are safe, even if teachers aren’t vaccinated. According to the Legislative Fiscal Office, the Governor received hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government for resources schools need to reopen. President Biden’s COVID bill would give K-12 schools another \$1.2 billion, yet classrooms remain empty.

“The Governor has completely failed Oregon families and students,” Sen. Girod said. “She first promised that schools would reopen on February 15. She failed to put our kids first. Now she is moving the goalposts to the spring. Parents and kids no longer have any trust in her empty promises. We need truly bold action. Gov. Brown is the Superintendent of Public Instruction. She

needs to start acting like it and demand teachers unions immediately send their members back into the classroom.”

Senate Republicans have an education package to give parents and kids control over their education and use budget authority to reopen schools.

### **EQUITABLE VACCINE DISTRIBUTION**

Oregon is the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst in the country in vaccinating seniors, who are most vulnerable to COVID-19. To make matters worse, vaccines have been siphoned from rural counties and redirected to Portland, despite having one of the highest vaccination rates in the state.

“This vaccine is a matter of life and death,” Girod continued. “The Governor doubled down deprioritizing seniors in the vaccine line, even when evidence suggested teachers didn’t need to be vaccinated to reopen schools. That decision almost certainly cost lives, and she tried to get away with covering up those deaths, when OHA decided they didn’t want to release the data. Its time for the Legislature to step in and hold the Governor accountable for these failures. We must use vaccines to save the most number of lives. That means seniors need to be prioritized and rural Oregon needs their fair share.”

### **HELPING STRUGGLING OREGONIANS RECOVER**

Oregon’s economic recovery lags behind the rest of the country. While the United States has recovered 56% of jobs lost during the pandemic, Oregon has [only](#) recovered 37%. Our unemployment rate is well above the national median. Thousand struggle to pay rent, tens of thousands are without jobs, and women are dropping out of the workforce at an alarming rate.

Despite these facts, Governor Brown extended her emergency declaration, further tightening her grip on small businesses and working Oregonians.

“Our main concern this session ought to be helping Oregonians recovery from the pandemic and its economic devastation,” Senate Republican Leader, Fred Girod said. “Yet Democrats are intent on taxing COVID relief money and increasing the cost of living for Oregonians. I urge Legislative leaders to pass Senate Republican bills aimed at giving working Oregonians relief and getting them back to work.

“Yesterday’s Revenue Forecast indicated that the state has brought \$800 million is extra tax dollars. President Biden’s bailout plan will add billions of more dollars. There is no need for new taxes!”

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