



**KAREN MINNIS
SPEAKER
OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

July 22, 2003

The Honorable Theodore R. Kulongoski
Governor of Oregon
Oregon State Capitol – Room 254
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Kulongoski:

I am insulted by the condescending and demeaning tone of your letter. The Legislature is an equal branch of government and does not require lecturing from the Executive.

I want to remind you of something you said just three months ago: “I do not define leadership by raising taxes. I do not think that is what the public wants, nor do I think its good public policy.”

Governor, what this building has so desperately lacked is consistent leadership from your office. You have said for months that we cannot build trust with Oregonians by insisting on higher taxes, yet you and Democrat lawmakers have insisted on spending levels that leave no other choice but dramatically higher taxes.

It is time to move forward. I did not take the step I did today lightly, but did so because it has become clear that Democrat lawmakers in the House and Senate will not agree to a bipartisan budget unless that budget raises taxes on Oregonians to support – what would be in these difficult economic times – irresponsible levels of government spending.

Your intransigence in budget negotiations and your unwillingness to agree to lower, and more responsible spending levels have not helped the situation. As you suggested several times in our recent meetings, the House will now move its own budgets.

Republicans agree that \$5.3 billion is adequate to fund our schools next year, but your insistence that savings from PERS reforms and other cost efficiencies – which you have supported and championed – not be counted despite the fact that school districts across the state are budgeting these dollars, is disappointing and disingenuous.

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The best way state government can restore trust with Oregonians is by exercising the same kind of fiscal restraint that Oregonians are being forced to because of our poor economy. Republicans are willing to make tough votes for additional revenue, but we will not support the massive tax increases that would be required to support Democrat spending demands.

Frankly, I am disappointed that your only contributions to the revenue discussion in the last month have been that we capture half of President Bush's tax cut and grab \$200 million from local governments. Neither suggestion is acceptable to my caucus. Nor, would either suggestion come remotely close to restoring trust with Oregonians.

I continue to be hopeful that we can yet come to a fiscally-responsible agreement that will meet the needs of our citizens. My door is open, and I welcome realistic proposals to bridge our differences. But in the absence of such, the House will meet its constitutional obligation and pass a balanced budget.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Minnis".

Karen Minnis
Speaker
Oregon House of Representatives