



OFFICE OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT

900 Court St., N.E., Room S-203
Salem OR 97301

www.leg.state.or.us/senate/senpres

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Robin Maxey
(503) 986-1605
robin.maxey@state.or.us

April 25, 2008

SENATE PRESIDENT CALLS ON GOVERNOR TO INCLUDE SEISMIC RETROFITTING BONDS IN BUDGET

(SALEM) -- Senate President Peter Courtney today called on Governor Ted Kulongoski to include in his 2009-2011 biennial budget bond funding to make schools and emergency services buildings safer in the event of an earthquake.

“Certified smart people are telling us it’s not a matter of if, but of when a major earthquake will strike Oregon. The public has said they want our state’s schools and emergency service centers to be made safer. What are we waiting for?” Courtney said.

In 2002 the voters approved bonding to develop a granting program to upgrade public school and emergency services buildings to meet seismic code. The legislature followed this up in 2007 by funding positions at Oregon Emergency Management to support this granting program. To date, however, the positions haven’t been filled and the bonds approved six years ago have never been issued.

“Oregonians said six years ago that they want our public school buildings, police stations, fire departments and acute care hospitals retrofitted so that they can serve as safe havens when a major earthquake strikes our state,” Courtney said. “Scientists said this week that ‘the big one’ is coming. We can’t afford to put this off any longer.”

Courtney was referring to updated national seismic hazard maps released by the U.S. Geological Survey which show that the risk of a magnitude 9 earthquake off the Oregon coast is greater than previously believed.

“We need to get this process moving forward now so that we can be as prepared as possible when disaster hits,” Courtney said.

Courtney said the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries has done superb work in screening and evaluating the risk to school and emergency services buildings in Oregon. It’s time, however, to move some dirt, he said.

“When an earthquake of this magnitude strikes, buildings and bridges will collapse. Highways will buckle. Making certain that our police stations, fire houses and hospitals can continue to function will be essential to the effectiveness of our emergency response,” Courtney said.

“Beyond protecting our school children, retrofitted schools will serve as hubs of community and service as we recover and rebuild.

“We have the technology to make these buildings safer, but that technology won’t do us any good if we haven’t summoned the political will to put it to use.”