

# Senate Republican Office

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Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, S-323  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 9, 2011

CONTACT: Michael Gay  
(503) 986-1950  
(503) 781-8559

## **Republicans pull permanent, no-borrowing version of Cool Schools to Senate floor**

*Senate Bill 457 would provide permanent funding for school energy upgrades*

**Salem, OR** – Senate Republicans made a motion Thursday morning to take \$100 million in corporate welfare and give it to Oregon schools for renewable energy upgrades. The motion to pull Senate Bill 457 to the Senate floor failed on a party line vote, 14 to 16.

“Cool Schools is a great idea, something we have been pushing for years,” said Senator Larry George (R-Sherwood). “But we should pay for it by ending subsidies to mega-corporations, not maxing out the state credit card. The Senate voted to continue yesterday’s broken policies of borrow-and-spend.”

Oregon currently levies a 3% Public Purpose Charge on ratepayer utility bills, using a portion of the proceeds to subsidize energy upgrades for big corporations and other corporate welfare. Senate Bill 457 would redirect \$100 million of the Public Purpose Charge to help schools pay for projects that produce energy savings, like HVAC upgrades, solar panel installation and lighting upgrades. Rather than a one-time investment, redirecting the Public Purpose Charge towards schools would create a rolling investment of \$100 million every two years for school maintenance needs and upgrades.

Governor John Kitzhaber has taken up the call for energy investments in Oregon schools. Labeled “Cool Schools,” his concept is similar in its purpose but is a one-time only invest and borrows \$100 million to pay for the projects. In the last few years, Oregon has been near its limit on borrowing capacity. Last September, Oregon State Treasurer Ted Wheeler and the state's Debt Policy Advisory Commission called for a halt on new borrowing.

“We shouldn’t put these projects on the state credit card when we can pay for them with cash,” said George. “By constantly asking for an advance to pay for projects like this, we are tying the hands of future generations.

Oregon ranks in the bottom 25% of states for school maintenance support. Senate Republicans believe there is no reason that ratepayers should be subsidizing big businesses while schools are left out in the dark and cold. Senate Bill 457 would prioritize Oregon schools over corporate welfare.

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