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News Alert

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A budget plan to protect core services without increasing taxes

Dear Friend:

Today I joined my fellow House and Senate Republicans in announcing a *Back to Basics* budget plan. The plan funds a full school year, protects prioritized service areas like public safety and human services by giving them the same funding levels they received in the last two year budget and creates a \$1.374 billion surplus for targeted legislative add-backs and contingency reserves.

You can find a detailed outline of the plan by going [here](#) or by typing in http://www.leg.state.or.us/senaterepublicans/budget_brief.pdf to your web browser.

This budget protects our most important priorities: quality education for our kids, safe neighborhoods and services for the most needy and vulnerable. As Republicans, we applied the same philosophy that Oregon families and small businesses are applying to their budgets: funding what is most important with what we have, tightening our belt and being fiscally responsible.

By budgeting responsibly, we don't have to talk about raising taxes on Oregon families and small businesses in these tough times.

Highlights of the *Back to Basics Budget* include:

- This plan starts with the assumption that Oregon government does not need more revenue to provide the services that Oregonians need and value.
- The plan funds K-12 education with \$6.245 billion, holding

schools harmless with a zero cuts budget that ensures kids can receive a quality education through a full school year.

- The plan protects public safety, human services and other core functions by giving them at a minimum the exact budget they had last cycle
- The plan leaves a \$1.374 billion surplus for legislative add backs, enhancements, contingencies and reserves.
- The plan leaves \$457 million of our state reserves intact

Republicans built the *Back to Basics Budget* using a philosophy that funds the most important, core services first. This budget creates a starting point that holds services like K-12 education, higher education, public safety agencies and human services providers harmless from any cuts from their 2007-09 funding levels.

To protect these priorities, the budget uses \$911 million in Federal Stimulus money and \$457 million from the Rainy Day and Education Stability Funds, leaving \$457 million left in reserves. The budget also uses \$429 million in savings and efficiency enhancements. After funding each core service at their 2007-09 level, the budget leaves \$1.374 billion for the legislature to make targeted add-backs to the most important priorities.

Republicans believe the way Oregon has budgeted in the past is broken. For too long the legislature has spent every penny in the good times and continually increased government's bottom line without prioritizing and without responsibly managing our fiscal affairs. The legislature's fast-and-loose budgeting has created fundamentally unsustainable spending. The *Back to Basics Budget* is a first step in a different direction. This budget is based on priorities, on performance and on transparency.

In the past, the legislature has started the budget discussion with an automatic, no-questions-asked increase to state agencies, called the "Essential Budget Level." The legislature doesn't require agencies to come before the budget writing committee and justify why they need increases in their base levels of spending like a business would. The Legislature has handed out increases without asking tough questions about what drives the cost of state government and how we can better prioritize. The result is out of control spending and insurmountable deficits. In fact, over the last 10 years our state budget has increased by more than 75%.

The Back to Basics Budget is a fundamental change to the way the legislature budgets. Oregonians are hurting and having to make tough choices in their budgets at home and in their businesses right now. We think Oregon government should be making the same tough decisions and start managing taxpayer dollars with responsibility.

I will work hard to pass a state budget that adequately funds the most important government services, but doesn't require your family to send more of your hard-earned dollars to Salem. After responsibly balancing the budget, we must return to the hard work of creating jobs and putting Oregon's economy back on the right track.

Sincerely,

Senator Chris Telfer