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**HOUSE REPUBLICANS SEEK EDUCATION REFORMS;
GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY, MORE DOLLARS FOR THE CLASSROOM**
House Democratic Leadership Continues to Block Reforms

SALEM—House Republicans today brought an education reform package to the House Floor, seeking votes to increase accountability over education spending, put more dollars into the classroom, and to relieve homeschoolers of unnecessary regulation. The majority Democrats voted to keep these bills in the House Education Committee, where the reforms will likely die for the 2007 session.

“Oregonians believe schools already have enough money and should use what they have more efficiently,” said House Republican Leader Wayne Scott (R-Canby). “After approving a \$6.245 billion K-12 budget, Oregonians deserve accountability for their tax dollars. Unfortunately, House Democrats don’t agree.”

The package includes HB 2613, a bill from the bi-partisan Chalkboard Project to require regular audits of Oregon school districts and to promote best financial practices. With the highest per-pupil transportation costs in the region, the bill also revamps the state’s transportation funding formula.

“HB 2613 will increase efficiency and accountability in school spending,” said Rep. John Dallum (R-The Dalles). “The bill provides an independent state review of school district financial practices, and allows parents and taxpayers to see the results.”

The package also includes HB 3427 to require that 65 cents of every education dollar be spent on classroom education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Oregon ranks 40th in classroom spending with only 59 cents of every dollar reaching the classroom.

“Oregonians agree that the Legislature should prioritize education spending and put more dollars in the classroom,” said Rep. Gene Whisnant (R-Sunriver). “For just a few more cents on the dollars, we can put hundreds of millions of additional dollars into classroom instruction. This means more money for teachers, supplies, music, art and other important expenditures.”

Finally, House Republicans sought a Floor vote on HB 3450 to repeal testing requirements for home-educated students. The caucus, which passed similar legislation the past two sessions, believe the regulations serve as an obstacle to home-based instruction.

“We understand that for many Oregon parents, homeschooling offers the best way to provide an excellent education to their children,” said Rep. Linda Flores (R-Clackamas). “This bill allows parents to focus on meeting their child’s education needs, rather than meeting state testing standards. It brings Oregon into line with a growing number of states that are deregulating home education and empowering their homeschoolers.”

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