

# WHY NOT USE A PLAN THAT COULD WORK? By Jim Bice

The Democrat controlled state legislature has proposed their 2009 – 2011 budget. Due to the decline in revenues, largely because of President Obama's irresponsible economic policies, it includes cuts in many state services as well as \$800 million in tax and fee increases. The proposed budget also provides for pay increases for state employees and the hiring of approximately 1450 new state employees. All this while the Governor is opposing timber harvesting on federal lands within the state that would create jobs and increase revenues.

At a time when many Oregonians are losing their jobs, being cut back on working hours and struggling to make ends meet, our governor and Democrat controlled legislature are taking a lesson from the president and spending money we don't have and raising taxes on those who can least afford the extra burden! Make no mistake, taxing the wealthy is a reverse of the "trickle down" effect used so successfully by President Reagan when he led us out of the financial calamity created by President Carter. It is the wealthy who write the paychecks for the rest of us. When was the last time YOU received a paycheck from a poor person? Vilification and over taxation of the wealthy only results in the suffering of those who rely on the "greedy" corporations and

the "undeserved" wealthy for our jobs and livelihoods.

The economic path being followed in Washington and Salem is utterly contrary to the policies that allowed America to grow into the wealthiest and most successful nation in the history of mankind.

The way Oregon (and Washington D.C.) 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 Republicans in the legislature have devised a plan that would balance the budget, fund the most important programs and services and still allow for a reserve of over \$1 billion without raising taxes. It is called the "Back to Basics" plan...and an in-depth review by Koos News indicates it could work! The only problem is that the Democrats controlling the legislature will not give it a hearing.

The Back to Basics Budget is a first step in a different direction. This budget is based on priorities, on performance and on transparency. This budget protects our most important priorities: quality education for our kids, safe

neighborhoods and services for the most needy and vulnerable.

The Republican proposal applies 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. It is a 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.

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. Oregon government should be making the same tough decisions and start managing taxpayer dollars with responsibility, for a change.

The Republican Budget contains \$570 million in funds based on targeted savings. The budget also uses \$500 million from the ending balances of agencies that receive "Other Funds." On June 30, 2009 those accounts are projected to have more than \$2.5 billion that was not used during the 2007-09 budget cycle. The Legislative Fiscal Office has confirmed that \$500 million can be used to help with the 2009-11 budget.

The Back to Basics Budget uses 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.

This plan starts with the assumption that Oregon govern-

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