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Oregon business associations release top priorities for job creation

Organizations ask legislature to focus on job creation, getting people back to work

Salem, Ore. -- Today, the state's four major business associations announced the list of bills that need to be passed to spur job creation in Oregon. Associated Oregon Industries, Oregon Business Association, Oregon Business Council, and the Portland Business Alliance all came together in support of these bills.

"The legislature is making good progress on balancing the state budget and advancing key reforms in education and healthcare. On behalf of our members – and their employees, customers and vendors, business groups strongly support this work and will continue working with legislators and the governor on it every step of the way. But what we need now is a focus on job creation," said Pat Reiten, president of Pacific Power and chair of the Oregon Business Plan. "These bills are critical to getting Oregonians back to work and improving wages and incomes for Oregon families."

The business community backed a number of bills that would aid job creation and retention in Oregon. This list represents bills still under active consideration in Salem. A more comprehensive scorecard of all business bills considered this session, including those that did not make it through the initial stages of the legislative session, will be compiled at a later date.

At the top of this list is support for funding to grow innovation in the state through the Oregon Innovation Plan and the Engineering and Technology Industry Council. Other bills run the gamut from support for career training to improving permitting processes. Each bill would give a boost to employment and incomes and is a top priority for the state's economic recovery and growth. It is also important that these bills don't get watered down to a point where they are no longer effective.

"During the final weeks of session, there is always a rush to wrap up the legislature's business. We understand that and we want to make sure that these bills don't get overlooked, are approved by both houses and then signed into law by Governor Kitzhaber," said Reiten. "Too many Oregon families are struggling to make ends meet and these bills will help create jobs and put people back to work."

The Oregon Business Plan called for near-term action items to reverse Oregon's persistently high unemployment and lagging per capita income. A list of the group's specific legislative priorities is attached. All of the bills are currently active and in process and the organizations will be working throughout the remainder of session on their passage. Only one bill on the list, SB 301, reconnecting to certain provisions of the federal tax code, has been signed into law.

THE JOBS AGENDA

BILLS TO SPUR JOB CREATION IN OREGON*

Strengthen Oregon's Innovation Economy

- The \$18.95 million Oregon Innovation Plan investment to leverage private dollars commercializing research and enhancing industry innovation (OBDD budget).

Train Oregonians for High Demand Jobs

- \$33.1 million Engineering & Technology Industry Council investment in engineering education (OUS budget).
- \$3.5 million investment in on-the-job training and linking that investment to Oregon's Career Readiness Certificate (included in the governor's budget).
- **HB 3362:** Enhances Career and Technical Education.

Provide Tools for Communities to Attract and Retain Jobs

- **SB 219:** Allocates lottery monies to Business Oregon for the Jobs Retention and Expansion program.
- **HB 3017:** Extends sunset for Enterprise Zone program until 2025.

Improve Permitting Processes and Make Industrial Land Available

- **SB 264:** Expedites approval of driveways providing access from businesses to state highways. Also provides objective standards to govern the approval process.
- **SB 766:** Speeds up permitting for industrial projects and protects industrial areas from conversion and unnecessary restrictions or overlays.
- **SB 792:** Creates a pilot project for Central Oregon to better connect economic development and land use planning across jurisdictions.
- **HB 2700:** Expedites permitting for linear infrastructure and pipeline projects.
- **HB 3591-A:** Provides clear direction to the DEQ to seek to minimize negative economic impacts of conditions in the variances on new water quality standards, while still meeting the most demanding EPA requirements in the nation.

Create Jobs in the Woods by Increasing Active Forest Management, Use of Biomass Energy

- **HB 2001:** Ensures state forest lands produce jobs and revenue for counties, schools and local taxing districts.
- **SB 620:** Extends existing Biomass Collectors Tax Credit until 2019.
- **HB 2936:** Creates biomass transportation tax credit.

Advance Infrastructure Projects to Create Jobs, Strengthen our Economic Foundation

- **HB 2166:** Connect Oregon IV multi-modal transportation investment.

Advance Energy Projects to Create Jobs Today, Make Oregon More Efficient Tomorrow

- **HB 2690:** Energy efficiency in schools (if properly implemented).

Make Targeted Tax Changes to Spur Investment, High-Wage Jobs

- **SB 301:** Allows for accelerated depreciation of certain business investments. **PASSED!**
- **HB 3174:** Extends R&D tax credit until 2018.
- **A package to reduce capital gains taxes while growing Oregon's rainy day fund through kicker reform and disciplined savings.**

*These bills are still pending in the state legislature and need to be passed to support job creation and retention in Oregon. It is also important that these bills do not get watered down to a point where they are no longer effective. A more comprehensive scorecard of all jobs bills considered this session, including those that did not make it through the initial stages of the legislative session, will be compiled at a later date.

Associated Oregon Industries' mission is to promote prosperity and the highest quality of life for all Oregonians by advancing Oregon business. www.aoi.org.

The Oregon Business Association provides bipartisan, statewide business leadership that strives to ensure Oregon's continued economic competitiveness. www.oba-online.org.

The Oregon Business Council is an association of more than 40 top business executives focused on public issues that affect Oregon's life and future. www.orbusinesscouncil.org.

The Portland Business Alliance is Greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce representing nearly 1,300 businesses in the region. www.portlandalliance.com.