

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

HOME | CLASSIFIEDS | AUTOS | HOMES | JOBS | FAQ | CONTACT US

SOUTHERN OREGON'S NEWS SOURCE

Mail Tribune *Discover Life Daily*

WEATHER FOR MEDFORD:

SUNNY 86°
Forecast /Radar

NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS OPINION LIFESTYLE TEMPO MULTIMEDIA COMMUNITY SPECIAL REPORTS INTERACT CLASSIFIEDS MAGAZINES

School reform a slow process

Chalkboard Project won some, but much remains to be done

June 29, 2007

The Chalkboard Project has given the 2007 Legislature a grade of "incomplete" for its work on public education issues. That shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the frustrations of lobbying lawmakers — you win some, you lose some and you come back next time prepared to do it all over again.

In the case of the Chalkboard group and the legislation it supported this year, an incomplete grade is especially unsurprising because Chalkboard's agenda involved moving entrenched interests in the public school system, from local school boards to the teachers union, out of their comfort zones.

Fundamental changes can't be accomplished in a single legislative session, but the effort should continue over the long haul, because the payoffs would be well worth the investment.

The Chalkboard Project is a joint effort begun in 2004 by five Oregon foundations — the Collins Foundation, the Ford Family Foundation, Jeld-Wen Foundation, the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Oregon Community Foundation. Before approaching the Legislature, the group conducted unprecedented statewide polling and focus group meetings to measure public attitudes toward schools.

Several of the more sweeping changes Chalkboard is advocating are intended to increase public confidence that schools spend tax dollars wisely and in ways that benefit students.

On the revenue side, lawmakers doubled the state's reserve fund and diverted two years of corporate income-tax "kicker" refunds into it — a move Chalkboard and others pushed hard for. That was a long-overdue step that should provide stability for school funding in the future.

On the spending side, results were mixed:

- The state Department of Education will study how districts fund student transportation — especially important in a state where busing costs range from 24 cents per mile to nearly \$9, and per-rider costs run from less than \$300 to more than \$13,000.
- A proposal to require districts to undergo performance audits fared less well. Chalkboard wanted mandatory audits performed by independent auditors; they got voluntary audits by the secretary of state's office. Too often, districts view state audits as punitive even though the goal is increasing efficiency.
- A proposal to make sure mandatory professional development courses actually improve student achievement died in the Ways and Means Committee.
- Chalkboard advocates spending state money on reforms that have been proven to get results. The group wanted the School Improvement Fund to pay more for proven reforms than for non-proven programs, but settled for requiring districts to specify how their spending will affect school and student performance.
- A push to do away with permanent early retirement options for school employees went nowhere. This practice does move highly-paid teachers off the payroll, making room for larger numbers of beginning teachers, but health insurance and pension payments to early retirees can cost districts a bundle.

Many of the changes Chalkboard is pursuing will require support from all affected parties — from school boards that want to protect local control to unions that seek to protect their members' interests.

Building that support will take time and patience. The reward will be a public school system every Oregonian can be proud of.

Text Size: **A** | **A** | **A**

Print this Article | Email this Article | Respond to this Article

Share

del.icio.us | Digg This Story | reddit | STUMBLEUPON | MY YAHOO! | Add to Google | Twit this

NEWS CALENDAR HOMES AUTOS JOBS CLASSIFIEDS

search MailTribune.com **FIND IT!**

Mortgage Rates Fall Again!

\$510,000 Mortgage for Under \$1,498/Month!
No SSN Required



1. Select Your State
Alabama
2. Select Your Rate
3.99% & Below
3. Select Your Credit
Good

Calculate New Payment

Shop Our Valley Classified Place an Ad **ONLINE!**

TOP JOBS

- Experienced Pipe
 - HR/Payroll Specialist
 - Executive Assistant
 - SOFCU Community Credit
 - Ophthalmic (Retina)
 - Auto Technician Experience
 - Carpenters & Laborers
 - Certified lifeguard
- [More jobs](#)

Subscribe to the **Mail Tribune**
Click here to get **2 weeks free!**

July Issue Available Online
Elegant Earth Tones Ground a New Master Suite

HOME

READER REACTION

These discussions and our forums are not moderated. We rely on users to police themselves, and [flag inappropriate comments and behavior](#). You need not be registered to [report abuse](#). In accordance with our [Terms of Service](#), we reserve the right to remove any post at any time for any reason, and will restrict access of registered users who repeatedly violate [our terms](#). Click [here](#) if you wish to report inappropriate comments or behavior.



Be the first to post a comment using the form below

[Browse News Forum](#)

[Browse all Forums](#)

[Report Abuse](#)

*Posts may not appear immediately and are subject to Mail Tribune's Terms of Use.

Ads By Google

Foreclosure Listings

The smartest way to find a home
Huge databases full of listings
www.ForeclosedFiles.com

New Horizons Learning Ctr

The Official Site of New Horizons.
Contact a Center Near You!
NewHorizons.com

[Advertise through Google AdWords on this Site.](#)

[Print this Article](#) [Email this Article](#)

Share

[del.icio.us](#)

[Digg This Story](#)

[reddit](#)

[STUMBLEUPON](#)

[MY YAHOO!](#)

[Add to Google](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#) | [COPYRIGHT](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [ADVERTISE](#) |

Copyright © 2007 Mail Tribune. The Mail Tribune maintains the copyright for all material posted here.
Any reproduction for other than personal use will be considered a violation of that copyright.

Paid Advertising

Home Security Systems
Online Casino Reviews
Trunks, Footlocker
Fundraisers

Homeowner Loans
Cord Blood Banking Discount Hotel
Reservations
Texas Electric Choice

Compare Electric rates in Texas
Online Casino Windermere Van Vleet

Men's Clothing
Debt Help
New School Tattoos