

## 2007 Legislature needs your input to succeed

State police, land use and education are among top issues

January 7, 2007

Your Legislature is coming to Salem on Monday. That's right -- YOUR Legislature. Which is why this editorial is addressed to you, our neighbors throughout the Mid-Valley. If the 2007 Legislature doesn't accomplish things that are important to Oregonians, you -- and we -- will share the blame. It will be because you -- and we -- haven't kept legislators focused on those issues.

Legislators do care about their constituents.

They couldn't get elected without your votes. And when enough of you speak up, they'll listen.

Five issues should command legislators' attention during the next several months. You, and they, will have other concerns as well, but the 2007 session will be a failure unless these five are addressed.

### 1. Education reform

The Chalkboard Project has undertaken the most comprehensive, independent review of Oregon schools in years. Its proposals would improve schools as well as their accountability to taxpayers.

The political independence of the Chalkboard Project, as well as the depth of its research and involvement with rank-and-file Oregonians, gives it the most credibility of any education organization at the Capitol. The Legislature should swiftly approve its proposals.

### 2. Education funding

Gov. Ted Kulongoski proposed a big boost in school funding.

Put that money into the classroom -- hiring more teachers, reducing class sizes, and linking new teachers with experienced mentors to help them succeed.

The Legislature also has two corollary responsibilities. One is to make education dollars stretch farther. Good ideas include creating a statewide insurance pool for school employees and undertaking a statewide review of teacher and public-employee compensation.

The state also should help districts repair existing schools and build new ones. That money can come through school-related development fees or a statewide construction fund.

### 3. Fiscal restraint

These are good times economically. But Oregon is only a few years removed from tough times.

The Legislature should create a rainy-day fund, as Kulongoski and others have proposed. But the Legislature also must exercise self-discipline and not pour money into programs that will be unsustainable.

### 4. State police

It's unconscionable that Oregonians -- yes, the blame starts with us voters -- have downsized the state police even as our state's population grew. The Legislature

### Links

Oregon Legislature:

[www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us)

Chalkboard Project:

<http://chalkboardproject.org>

should authorize enough troopers to provide around-the-clock patrols on highways throughout Oregon, as well as sufficient backup.

## 5. Land use

Legislators ignored property owners' frustrations for so long that voters finally passed Measure 37.

But that law has created its own mess. Fix it.

There are many other important statewide and local issues, from health care and ethics reform to water policy and affordable housing. But these five should top the to-do list for legislators and voters alike.

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