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Political and personal agendas trump special session, leaves Oregonians still hurting

Need for jobs and rainy day fund remain unaddressed as final gavel drops

Salem, OR – The final “practice run” of Oregon’s even numbered year session was defined by political posturing, retribution and a distinctly partisan agenda, leaving little substantive work product for Oregonians to feel good about. The session began February 1st and in the afternoon of February 25th.

“Little has been done this session to address the number one issue facing Oregonians: a lack of jobs,” said Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). “This special session was intended to demonstrate that the legislature could be trusted with another session if it was used to address state emergencies and pressing policy issues, the issues that matter to Oregonians. Instead, the majority party has spent the last 24 days using the legislature as their personal political cattle prod, hoping that Oregonians won’t notice the posturing and vengeful, partisan retribution against political enemies.”

Much has been made of the 209,000 Oregonians who can’t find work today. Since January of last year, when Democrats first vowed to address Oregon’s festering unemployment problem, the state has hemorrhaged another 50,000 jobs.

“The so-called ‘job creating’ efforts from this session are much like putting lipstick on a scorpion; it looks good but doesn’t change what it is,” said Senator Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro). “We need to enact significant changes to Oregon’s business environment if we are going to get back on firm economic footing. Anything less might make good headlines, but does little to shorten Oregon’s unemployment lines.”

Instead of focusing on job creation, this session dedicated significant time to bills seeking retribution against individuals, coalitions and associations that played an active role fighting the recently proposed tax increases. According to investigation published in *The Bend Bulletin*, Head Start, the Oregon Bankers Association and individual lobbyists were all targeted by various levels of threats or legislation designed punish interests that displeased the ruling powers.

“Since when did the legislature become about personal vendettas and exacting a pound of flesh from political opponents?” said Senator Jeff Kruse (R-Roseburg). “This is worse than partisanship, this is the politics of personal power and arrogance, and it is an abuse of and a black eye on this process.”

Other legislation, like freezing the unpopular expansion of the earned time law until after the November election, was designed specifically to provide political cover for the majority party.

“Unfortunately the business of Oregonians was ignored in favor of special interest politics and posturing,” said Ferrioli. “Real issues like creating a rainy day fund and fostering an environment where employers can grow and prosper were completely ignored.

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