

# WestLinn Tidings

## STANDING up for CHILDREN

*Students, parents and educators gathered at the Capitol on Monday in the Stand for Children rally meant to bring awareness to budget cuts*

**BY REBECCA MAYER**

*The Lake Oswego Review, Feb 19, 2009*

More than 60 school buses lined the mall in front of the state capitol on Monday. They carried the bulk of the crowd of 5,000 parents, educators and students to the Stand for Children rally that called upon legislators to keep budget cuts away from education.

The state is facing a \$500 to \$800 million shortfall in this budget cycle and anticipates another \$2 billion loss in the next biennium. The downturn is forcing some school districts to consider a shorter school year.

In the West Linn-Wilsonville School District, some estimates have pegged the potential loss in state funding at more than \$3 million, but Business Manager Bill Knowles said that's likely a worst-case-scenario number.

In reality, he said, "We have no idea what that number is going to be," although he admitted it could be more than the roughly \$1 million funding reduction announced last December.

He hopes to have a concrete figure soon so the district can balance its budget by the end of June.

Rally attendees advocated a range of potential short-term and long-term solutions.

Outlined in blue, one creative umbrella-shaped sign read, "Today is a rainy day. Cover our kids." The sign asked legislators to release the rainy day fund this spring to help school districts preserve this year's budget as much as they can. The rainy day fund is currently worth \$291.7 million.

Rally participants punctuated their list of long-term solutions to the inevitable shortfall with a call to change the current tax system in Oregon. "There are things that are broken about our revenue system and now is the time to fix them," said Tom Olson, a retired educator from Canby. "It needs to change now."

Most large corporations pay only a \$10 minimum tax, which hasn't changed in over 70 years, he said. Olson also mentioned taxes on beer and wine that haven't gone up in decades.

Jonah Edelman, Stand for Children founder and CEO, asked legislators to invest in programs that have well-documented success. "We're here to support our legislators in asking the tough questions and making the tough decisions to ensure tax dollars go to the programs that really work," he said.

He named three investments he feels have a high return: mentorships for new teachers, health insurance for all children and funding pre-K.

The rally also urged lawmakers to spend wisely the money the state will receive from the \$787 billion federal stimulus package, which President Barack Obama signed into law on Tuesday.

Education-related support to Oregon in the federal stimulus package includes up to \$466 million in direct aid for K-12, \$135 million for special education, \$137 million for Title I, \$7 to \$17 million for Head



Thousands convene with signs galore on the steps of the Oregon state capitol for a noon rally organized by Stand for Children.

L.E. BASKOW

Start as well as \$196 million for college Pell grants.

The U.S. House of Representatives committee reports about \$1.6 million for West Linn-Wilsonville School District that would come through the IDEA funds for special education and \$307,000 from Title I funds. Figures for direct K-12 aid are unavailable at the district level yet.

Senate President Peter Courtney spoke of the direness of the situation as a whole and told the crowd that the welfare of children would be a factor in each aspect of the budget from education to healthcare, safety and others.

“I can make no promises here today other than to say that I believe our children are the future,” he said.

---

Copyright 2009 Pamplin Media Group, 6605 S.E. Lake Road, Portland, OR 97222 • 503-226-6397