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## Oregon lawmakers highly resolved on matters of state

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PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Democrats and Republicans who will descend on Salem for the 2007 legislative session share at least one New Year's resolution: To get out of there before June 30th.

Beyond not repeating the marathon session of 2005, the New Year's resolutions of lawmakers, lobbyists and the others who will pack into the Capitol next year are all over the map, from holding the line on new taxes to a top-to-bottom overhaul of the state's health care system.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski's resolutions are no secret, spelled out in the budget he presented earlier this month, which advocates for everything from more money for community college construction to adding 139 new state troopers, reducing the caseloads of individual child welfare workers to the development of a geothermal energy project.

Democrats, as a group, seem to have resolved to be more magnanimous in the majority than their Republican counterparts have been in years past, announcing measures to make it easier for members of the minority party to get bills to the floor and making committee assignment according to each party's share of the chamber.

But incoming House Speaker Jeff Merkley of Portland and his House Majority Leader, Dave Hunt of Milwaukie, will also need to keep their friends close since their 31-29 margin in the chamber is a slim one.

Republicans, meanwhile, are just as resolved that Kulongoski's proposals represent a case of spending-gone-wild. Though they're outnumbered in both the House and the Senate, they've decided to keep some of the new spending proposals, as well as any possible tax-and-fee increases, front-and-center, in hopes of either defeating the plans or making them campaign issues in 2008.

Jason Williams, the executive director of the conservative Oregon Taxpayers Association, said his number one resolution for the 2007 session is to "at least stop half of the new taxes they want to raise."

Proposals to increase the auto insurance tax and business filing fees are tops on his hit list, Williams said, and he'll look to lawmakers like House Rep. Linda Flores, R-Clackamas, and State Sen.-elect Larry George, R-Sherwood, to carry the anti-tax flag.

Beyond that, Williams said, he'll dedicate much of his time to publicizing any legislative attempts to raise taxes, in hopes of spurring a public outcry that could shut down some of the efforts.

Others are preparing to spend a session on the offense. Jonah Edelman, executive director of Stand for Children, the education advocacy group that emerged as a force during the 2005 session, said he's resolved to push hard

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for a teacher mentoring program, an idea that's been gaining in currency lately and benefited from a \$5 million earmark in Kulongoski's proposed budget.

Edelman said his group will look to House Education Committee member Arnie Roblan, a Democrat from Coos Bay, to advocate for a mentor program, and to Hunt to be the leading voice for repeal of the so-called "double majority" requirement, which requires a 50 percent voter turnout requirement for property-tax measures proposed by schools and other local governments.

Others, too, are dreaming big for the session. Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said he's resolved to see this as the year when construction begins on a new state hospital for the mentally ill, to replace the old, decaying institution.

"(The state hospital) has never gotten the notoriety, the emphasis, the priority," Courtney said. "There are always these other issues that come flooding in and become more important. But this could be the year. The mo is there."

State Sen. Vicki Walker, D-Eugene, said she's resolved to push for expanding the state's children health insurance program, reducing class sizes in the state's 198 public school districts, and for increasing the minimum tax corporations must pay, currently \$10 and unchanged for decades.

"Democrats have been given a golden egg," she said. "I want to polish it. I don't want to crack it."

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