

# 2021 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It goes without saying that the 2021 Legislative Session was unlike any other session Oregon has witnessed in recent memory. From gavel-in to adjournment sine die, Oregonians watched as the Legislature attempted to navigate a worldwide public health emergency *and* conduct the people's business.

In order to accomplish this, legislative leadership ramped up a fully virtual session that found one of the most accessible capitol buildings in the country closed to the public. While this action was a key contention of the session – leading to a short-lived walkout by Republicans in late February – business carried on with the use of video conferencing for public hearings and strict protocols for floor votes.

While the overall session went as smooth as it could have, it was not without complications and controversy. The Oregon House of Representatives lost several days throughout the session when positive COVID-19 tests were identified among members and staff – leading to the cancellation of multiple floor sessions and many members missing for floor votes due to illness and isolation.

This session also saw two members of the House forced to vacate their seats. The first, Democrat Rep. Diego Hernandez, resigned under growing pressure to do so based on multiple allegations of harassment in the workplace. The second, Republican Rep. Mike Nearman, became the first legislator in Oregon's history to be expelled from the Legislature after evidence surfaced of his involvement with armed protesters at our capitol.

Despite all of these roadblocks and distractions, a majority of legislators were able to work together to meet their constitutional obligation of crafting and passing a budget for the next biennium. The efforts of the Ways and Means Tri-Chairs were buoyed by a very optimistic May revenue forecast and the infusion of federal American Rescue Plan funds.

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## PROGRESS IN EDUCATION

When it comes to issues related to pre-K to 20 education, the Legislature spent this session debating bills and budgets aimed at providing quality, equitable education and child care access for all Oregonians. Some highlights of these efforts include, but are not limited to: expanded health care and unemployment insurance access for part-time faculty and classified staff; increased financial aid for students; the inclusion of class size as a mandatory aspect of collective bargaining; and the use of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to increase access to child care throughout the state.

On top of the many policy efforts, the Legislature allocated over \$3 billion to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (including \$900 million for the Public University Support Fund and \$703 million for the Community College Support Fund), just under \$7 billion to the Oregon Department of Education, fully funding the Student Success Act and providing \$9.3 billion to the State School Fund for the next biennium. Outstanding issues with the State School Fund are set to be addressed during the interim.

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

**2519**

*Bills introduced this session*

**719**

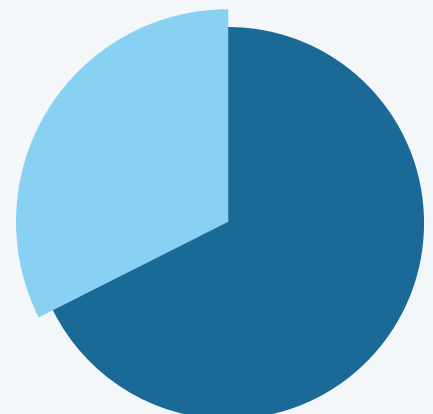
*Bills enacted*

**752**

*Passed by the House*

**783**

*Passed by the Senate*



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## OVERVIEW

Our team was proud to support the work of AFT-Oregon and be your eyes, ears and amplified voice in Salem – and across Zoom – this legislative session. We were able to deepen the awareness of AFT-Oregon’s mission and goals with Oregon Senators and Representatives, their staff, our higher education coalition partners, and members of the Governor’s office.

As your legislative champions, we provided direct lobbying of state leaders – tracking the concerns, support, progress and changes of each of AFT’s priority bills. Through direct legislator meetings, collaboration with partner unions, feedback from university and AFT members, testimony tracking and drafting – as well as a comprehensive understanding of the current needs within higher education – our team was able to provide big wins for AFT-Oregon this session!

We held dozens of meetings with legislators on your behalf this session, meeting with both champion legislators and those in opposition of AFT’s priority bills to advance AFT priorities.

Our team provided timely communication and policy materials on a range of AFT’s priority bills, including: written testimony in support of [SB 854](#), [SB 712](#), and [HB 3007](#), and in opposition of [SB 112](#); a [Joint Revenue Statement](#); an [email campaign](#) and [one-pager](#) for SB 551; [thank you cards](#); and much more.

## AFT VIRTUAL LOBBY WEEK

With support from a wide range of AFT members and constituents, our team successfully hosted AFT’s first ever Virtual Lobby Week, which consisted of 15 separate lobby meetings. Each meeting offered the opportunity to champion AFT’s priority bills, address any questions or concerns raised by legislators, and provided AFT members a unique opportunity to share their personal stories in a conversational setting.



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## **AFT-OREGON LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES**

### **Adjunct Faculty Health Care: SB 551**

**PASSED: OR Senate 20-9 | OR House 50-5**

A historic legislative win over a decade in the making, SB 551 will ensure that AFT-Oregon adjunct faculty members have access to quality and affordable health insurance. With nearly \$13 million allocated to the newly created Part-Time Faculty Insurance Fund established by SB 551, adjunct faculty who work at least half time will be provided the same employer offered health insurance available to their other faculty colleagues at the home institution selected by the adjunct faculty.

### **Student Loan Forgiveness Eligibility: HB 3255**

**PASSED: OR Senate 20-2 | OR House 52-6**

Further addressing inequities for adjunct faculty, HB 3255 will require notification to all eligible education employees in Oregon about the Public Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF) as well as direct institutions to credit adjunct faculty with 3.35 hours of credit for every one hour of instruction – a much needed policy to ensure adjunct faculty can participate in the PSLF program.

### **UI Clarity for Education Assistants: SB 495**

**PASSED: OR Senate 21-7 | OR House 40-17**

The passage of SB 495 provides clarity for education assistants when trying to access UI benefits. By aligning statutory definitions of “instruction,” SB 495 removes confusion within the Oregon Employment Department and provides clarity about which employees a “reasonable assurance” test must be applied to.

### **Removing UI Barriers for Classified Staff: SB 496**

**PASSED: OR Senate 22-6 | OR House 46-9**

With the enrollment of SB 496, the Legislature removed the unfair restriction on UI eligibility for school employees in Head Start programs and food service and ensured these employees will not face adjudication when trying to access UI benefits.

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## AFT-OREGON LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

### HECC Voting Rights: SB 712

**PASSED: OR Senate 18-10 | OR House 50-10**

AFT-Oregon's HECC Voting Rights bill will extend voting rights to the existing Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) positions for students, faculty, and non-faculty higher education staff and creates one new position to extend much-needed representation to graduate students.

## ACTIVATED CHAMPIONS: 2021 SESSION

### Senate

Dembrow  
Frederick  
Gelser  
Golden  
Gorsek  
Kennemer  
Lieber  
Patterson  
Prozanski  
Wagner

### House

Alonso Leon  
Bynum  
Campos  
Dexter  
Drazan  
Evans  
Fahey  
Grayber  
Holvey  
Hudson  
Kotek  
Kropf  
Leif  
Marsh  
Meek  
McLain  
Neron  
Nosse  
Owens  
Power

Prusak  
Reardon  
Reynolds  
Ruiz  
Sanchez  
Schouten  
Smith DB  
Sollman  
Stark  
Valderrama

Weber  
Wilde  
Williams  
Wright  
...and many others!

## MEDIA CLIPS

- [Oregon bill aims to increase university board transparency, campus voices](#)
- [Oregon lawmakers cut unemployment insurance taxes by \\$2.4 billion, made modest reforms to jobless programs](#)
- [Higher education governance reform bill dies, but Oregon universities commit to changes](#)

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## SPECIAL SESSION

Every 10 years, the Legislature holds a special session for redistricting – a once-in-a-decade opportunity to redistribute Oregon’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries to account for population changes across the state. The decisions made during the redistricting session will impact how every Oregon resident is represented, and with whom, for the next decade.

Unlike redistricting sessions of the recent past, this year’s session will include the drawing of an entirely new Congressional district, as Oregon qualified for a sixth seat thanks to the population growth data collected from the 2020 Census. The last time Oregon qualified for a new Congressional district was in 1980.

This year’s special session is scheduled to be held, tentatively, on September 20, 2021 and will be open to the public – assuming COVID-19 protocols permit. Due to scheduled construction beginning at the Capitol this July, operations will be severely impacted, and the wings, hearing rooms and parking garage will be closed. However, the chambers and other common areas of the building should remain open.

Current members of the House Special Committee on Redistricting are Representatives Boshart Davis, Salinas, Bonham, Campos, Drazan and Pham. Current members of the Senate Committee on Redistricting are Senators Taylor, Knopp, Beyer, Frederick and Hansell.

The deadline for the Oregon Legislature to enact its new Legislative and Congressional redistricting plans is  
**Monday, September 27, 2021.**



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## OREGON LEGISLATIVE DAYS

Legislative days are a great opportunity to advance your priorities and connect with key legislators on the issues that are most important to your members. Keep these dates in mind as you strategize for the future:

### 2021

August 25: Revenue Forecast  
September 20: Special Session  
September 21-24: Legislative Days  
September 27: Redistricting Deadline  
November 2: Election Day  
November 15-17: Legislative Days  
November 17: Revenue Forecast  
November 18: Optional Task Force Day  
November 19: LC Request Deadline

### 2022

January 10: Optional Task Force Day / LC Return Deadline  
January 11-13: Legislative Days  
January 14: LC Drop Deadline  
February 1-March 7: 2022 Short Session  
February 9: Revenue Forecast  
March 8: Filing Day

## YOUR LOBBYING TEAM



Debbie Dorris Koreski  
503.309.5617



Taylor Sarman  
541.910.5711



Dan Lombardi  
541.583.0211



Heather Rockwell  
541.852.1523