

EDITORIAL

# Let the 'education revolution' begin

Oregon's next legislative session must focus on job-creation and education.

The former is a no-brainer. The latter has become an absolute necessity.

Early signs of an education revolution are encouraging.

● Former Gov. John Kitzhaber's transition team is already working on his campaign promise to create thousands of new jobs by weatherizing schools across the state.

● The Dec. 13 Oregon Business Summit will include a discussion on new educational funding models. As Oregon Business Plan Steering Committee members traveled the state in the past year to discuss regional priorities, education was a consistent theme.

Specifically, regional leaders in Baker City, Astoria, Central Oregon and Klamath Falls all rated education reform a top priority.

● Four Oregon state legislators — Democrats Rod Monroe and Betty Komp and Republicans Frank Morse and John Huffman — will convene an education summit on Dec. 7 in Salem. The gathering, which is open only to state legislators and staffers, seeks to explore bipartisan solutions to early-childhood and K-12 education funding.

If nothing else, Oregon's plodding economy is fomenting discussions that were politically untenable just a few years ago.

Momentum is growing behind University of Oregon President Richard Lariviere's plan to do away with annual state funding in favor of a public-private endowment for higher education.

As Lariviere notes, at about \$60 million annually, UO's share of the state higher-education budget is actually smaller than it was two decades ago.

Any overhaul must also include community colleges and their role in work force development. Systems across the state report double-digit enrollment increases for the 2010-2011 school year.

None of these initiatives will come without pain. The 2011 legislative session could be particularly brutal, as state leaders face a daunting \$3.5 billion budget gap.

At least now there's a newfound urgency to fix the sad state of education in Oregon.

The poor economy has made education reform a hot topic.