



Lisa Joyce  
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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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### Legislation sets the stage to end homelessness

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*Salem*— Legislation that sets the stage to end homelessness swept past the Senate yesterday on its way to the House.

Senators unanimously passed SB 200, a bill that calls for creating a comprehensive and collaborative system of housing plus services that are vital to successfully end and prevent homelessness in Oregon.

"This bill will help us to move from planning to performance," said **Rick Crager**, deputy director of Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). "Children and families deserve no less than our best efforts to prevent and end homelessness."

**Sen. Diane Rosenbaum** (D-Portland), chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Workforce Development, credited the bill for recognizing the unique barriers each person experiencing homelessness faces.

"SB 200 encourages a process that stresses finding permanent homes for people using integrated services," she said.

Senate Majority Leader **Richard Devlin** (D-Tualatin) commented, "Given the economic downturn, Oregon's problem with homelessness isn't going to be fixed overnight." The bill, he said, sets the stage for implementation of the statewide strategy to get people off the streets and into affordable housing.

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The legislation is part of the Ending Homelessness Advisory Council's plan to end homeless in Oregon by 2016. Gov. Ted Kulongoski established the council in 2006.

### In other action:

OHCS submitted its list of General Fund Reductions to the Legislative Fiscal Office yesterday. LFO requested that every state agency develop a list of reductions in 5 percent increments up to 30 percent. The exercise anticipates bad news from the upcoming May 15 revenue forecast, with some legislative insiders predicting that the budget hole may grow from \$3 billion to \$5 billion or more.

At a 30 percent reduction, OHCS would face:

- Elimination of the Homeownership Assistance Program, \$842,468 cut impacting approximately 160 households.
- Elimination of the State Homeless Assistance Program, \$2,994,467 cut impacting approximately 21,630 homeless individuals.
- Significant reduction in the Emergency Housing Assistance fund, \$2,246,022 cut impacting approximately 18,410 homeless individuals.

A program that encourages low-income Oregonians to save for college, starting a small business, or buying a home passed the Senate floor yesterday.

HB 2258 changes the formula for individual development accounts (IDAs) to allow more Oregonians to qualify. The bill allows families who make up 200 percent of the federal poverty line to be eligible as compared to the previous requirement of 80 percent of the median income level per area.

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"This legislation corrects an inequity for rural families," **Devlin** said. "By adding in the adjustment to the federal poverty line, we can make sure that all low-income Oregonians have access to this program, regardless of what their neighbors make."

The state markets and sells IDA tax credits to individuals and businesses that have an Oregon tax liability. Proceeds from the sale of these tax credits provide resources for the matched savings accounts.

Other Oregon Housing and Community Services bills clearing the final chamber were:

- **HB 2256**, Housing Council review
- **HB 2257**, Community Development Incentive Project Funds
- **HB 2259**, Community Action Partnership of Oregon

The bills now go to the Governor for his signature.

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