

# SOU in Salem – Notes from the Capitol v. 2026, week 4

## Big News:

- **Governor issues letter of support for SOU** – on Thursday, Governor Kotek sent a [letter](#) to President Bailey expressing strong support for SOU and expressed her desire to see the institution exist “for many decades to come”. An all-campus [communication](#) to staff and faculty was sent Thursday afternoon, and a similar [communication](#) was sent to students Thursday evening.
- **Rep. Marsh’s bill to assess higher education structure and funding passes House** – On a vote of 36-6, the House on Friday passed HB 4124, which directs the HECC to assess the feasibility and efficacy of the current structure of higher education in Oregon, and directs it to offer recommendations around structure and funding/affordability, mission, and consistency of program offerings with workforce needs. Rep. Marsh issued a [press release](#), in which she noted it’s expected that the Legislature will issue a one-time budget allocation to stabilize SOU before the session ends.
- **Transportation referendum date change held over to final week of session** – The Senate approved a bill earlier that would move the date of the Referendum on the Transportation Package. A vote to approve the bill that was anticipated Thursday did not happen, and has been rescheduled for Monday.
- **Federal disconnect bill passes both houses, faces possible citizen referendum** – Both chambers have now passed SB 1507, which would disconnect Oregon from parts of the federal tax code, raising more than \$300 million additionally for the General Fund, and is awaiting signature by the Governor. Rep. Ed Diehl, who is running for Governor, has pledged to collect signatures to place a repeal on the ballot. If repealed, the situation could leave legislators with bigger budget challenges.
- **One-Day Walkout** – This week it was the House that saw Republicans walk out. At the beginning of the week, Republicans walked out of the Capitol over disagreements on the transportation package vote and on gun permit legislation, as well as a protest against a failure to conduct an investigation over a Democratic member’s conduct. This walkout delayed action on bills for a day.
- **Gun Permitting bill passes** – A controversial bill that modifies firearm permit provisions votes approved in Ballot Measure 114 (including permit fees) passed the House 33-19 on Wednesday. It is expected to be approved by the Senate next week.

## The Little Things:

**Rep Hartman Floor speech and tribute** – Rep. Alyssa Hartman, who was diagnosed with Stage 3 cervical cancer late last year, and has been absent from floor votes during part of the session, gave what may be her last floor speech Friday, in support of HB 4135, which declares March 4 as HPV Awareness Day. After the bill passed her colleagues from both parties gave her a standing ovation and expressed gratitude for her resilience in attending and carrying the bill.

## Bills of Interest:

- [SB 1507](#)-Targeted Changes to Oregon’s Tax Code to support working families (disconnecting from federal provisions) – Passed both chambers and headed for signatures.
- [SB 1512](#)-Prosperity 10,000 Workforce Program Expansion – Passed both chambers and awaiting Governor’s signature
- [SB 1538](#)-Promoting Early Literacy for School-Age Children – Passed both chambers and awaiting the Governor’s signature. (Note- The A-8 amendment allowing community college name changes did not move forward.)

- [SB 1547](#)-Creating a new licensed discipline of behavioral health and wellness practitioner – Passed both chambers and awaiting Governor’s signature
- [HB 4060](#)-Fluorescent Light Bill – passed the House 45-0; awaiting action in the Senate next week.
- [HB 4079A](#)-Safeguarding students and families during immigration enforcement – Passed the House 35-22; awaiting action in the Senate next week.
- [HB 4084B](#)-Fast Tracking the creation of “Enterprise Zones” - To be scheduled for a House vote next week.
- [HB 4124A](#)-Directing HECC to study or contract for a study to recommend an optimal structure for post-secondary institutions and affordability (Marsh Bill) – Passed House 36-6; headed to Senate.
- [HB 4138](#)-Requiring Law Enforcement officials to be identifiable – Passed the House 36-19; slated for a vote in the Senate next week.

**Things to consider:**

- What can you do this next week that will support SOU’s immediate stability and its future?

**What we are especially focused on:**

- Bridging with Governor’s Office and key legislative leaders and staying connected through the session and beyond
- Ensuring SOU ends the session with wins and no losses
- Supporting communications to the campus and external communities through the end of session

**Mantra:**

**FIGHT TOGETHER - WIN TOGETHER– RAIDER LOVE!**