

March 4th, 2009

The Honorable Theodore Kulongoski
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

As members of the Lane County Board of Commissioners, we too must balance our budget and make some difficult and painful choices in these most difficult of times. Unfortunately, like you, we are "between a rock and a hard place." We're forced to find what cuts will do the least harm.

That is why we urge you to minimize the harm to our Public Schools. We cannot think of a better investment for Oregon and Lane County.

For one, Public Schools are a critical economic driver. The jobs of the future require an educated work force. We cannot attract new business without it. Right now, Oregon has the largest elementary class sizes in the nation. That is a distinction we should not be proud of. Going backwards should not be an option.

Educated kids also make better choices out of school. After-school programs keep many at-risk kids out of trouble. Our expensive, overcrowded jails are filled with dropouts. Eighty percent of Oregon prison inmates are High School dropouts.

And furthermore, a shortened school year would leave many low-income families with no choice but to leave small children unattended.

We know your choices are difficult. We believe OUR Public Schools are a good investment. That is why we respectfully urge you to do not only what you can to support schools, but to use the Education Stability and the Federal Stimulus Dollars to enhance our educational system.

If now isn't the time, then when?

Sincerely,

Pete Sorenson, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners