

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Public Policy Priorities for the
2011 Session of the Oregon Legislative Assembly

1. **Give the highest priority to preserving and even expanding emergency and safety-net services for those at risk of homelessness and hunger.**
 - a. Expand funding for emergency rent assistance and homeless shelters through an expansion of funding for the **Emergency Housing Account**,
 - b. **Retain full funding for emergency food programs** and school meal programs.
 - c. **Expand funding for the TANF program** (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and increase TANF income eligibility and benefit levels.

2. **Take a balanced approach to resolving the state budget shortfall and enact kicker reform and take other steps to shore up the state Rainy Day Fund.** A balanced approach not only requires strategic cuts and restructuring of programs, but must also include steps to enhance state revenues through elimination of existing tax credits or other tax expenditures or through enacting new sources of revenue. Oppose legislation to roll back Prop. 66 & 67 tax increases and/or reduce capital gains tax unless offset by new revenue source of equal or greater amount that also meets EMO tax equity criteria as well as tax being reduced or replaced.

3. **Increase economic security and strengthen other supports for Oregon's children and families.**
 - a. Maintain funding for addiction prevention and treatment services, community mental health programs, and employment-related day care.
 - b. Preserve stable funding for domestic violence services that provide shelter, safety planning, and support services to victims in every county of the state.
 - c. Maintain or expand the state's *Earned Income Tax Credit* which is particularly effective in targeting its benefits to low-income working families with children.

4. **Sustain progress on health reform and fund long-term care:** Preserve current levels of funding for the Healthy Kids program and the Oregon Health Plan, and pass legislation establishing an Oregon Health Exchange. Remain on course with the commitment that all Oregonians will have access to affordable health care by 2015. Minimize cuts to Project Independence and to the state's long-term care programs for the low-income elderly.

5. **Support Sustainability and Creation Care.** The current economic crisis was not caused by environmental programs and regulations and it will not be solved by weakening environmental protections. Oregon must continue to make progress in reducing global warming emissions, promoting renewable energy, and protecting the public health:

- a. **Require the disclosure of building Energy Performance Scores** to buyers to spur energy efficiency, and **establish an Energy Efficiency Priority Standard** so that investor and consumer-owned utilities put energy efficiency investments ahead of investments in more costly coal and natural gas plants.
 - b. **Support a robust Low-Carbon Fuel Standard.**
 - c. **End the use of toxic bisphenol A (BPA) in baby bottles and food containers.**
 - d. **Support legislation to create vibrant local food systems, and economically viable family farms** including incentives to increase private investment in family farms, programs to increase access to land by beginning farmers and ranchers and improved access to credit for farm development and marketing.
6. **Enact consumer- and worker-protection legislation:**
- a. Curb high-cost tax Refund Anticipation Loans,
 - b. Strengthen protections for renters who are living in buildings that are undergoing foreclosure
 - c. Improve protections and enforcement for workers subject to wage theft, and
 - d. Pass protections against unexpected utility shut-offs for tenants whose landlords are responsible for paying for utilities.
7. **Strengthen human and civil rights:**
- a. Strengthen prosecution and penalties for those who attack homeless individuals
 - b. Take steps to curb human trafficking.
 - c. Strengthen policies regulating police use of force.
 - d. Support legislation allowing undocumented immigrants to apply for and receive a driver's license upon passing required driver's tests.
8. **Oppose legislation that involves state or local government in immigration enforcement** or that unnecessarily limits the rights of undocumented immigrants living in Oregon. This includes: **HB 2802** Prohibits restrictions on public body's ability to enforce immigration law to extent permitted by federal law. Authorizes legal resident to bring civil action against public body that violates prohibition; **HB 2803** Requires county to verify immigration status of person incarcerated in county correctional facility; **HB 2804** Requires evidence of citizenship for persons registering to vote for first time in this state; **HB 2805** Prohibits state agencies from providing employment, products, services or licenses to persons who are not lawfully present in United States; **HB 2806** Limits deductibility of expenses related to employment of workers hired on or after January 1, 2012 to workers whose eligibility for employment in United States has been verified through federal E-Verify employment verification system.

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9. **Support prison re-entry programs and a General Assistance pilot program.** Continue full funding for existing re-entry programs, and to establish a General Assistance (GA) pilot program to assist disabled inmates re-entering the population in order to assist them with securing federal SSI and/or SSDI benefits.
10. **Strengthen Educational Equity.**
 - a. Enact tuition equity legislation that removes tuition barriers that effectively prevent children of undocumented immigrants graduating from Oregon High Schools from pursuing a college degree in Oregon's higher education system.
 - b. Support funding for early-childhood education programs and oppose cuts that result in further reducing the length of the public school year or increasing average class sizes in Oregon schools.
11. **Adopt an ethic of shared sacrifice, bipartisanship and civility.** EMO encourages all who have a stake in state budget discussions, including public employee unions, business leaders, administrators, and others to embrace an ethic of shared sacrifice at this time so that we may avoid cuts to essential services for those who are at risk of homelessness, hunger, and poverty. We also encourage legislators to recognize the important human needs at stake and the difficulty of the challenges we face, and to embrace the necessity of finding bipartisan solutions in an atmosphere of civility.