

Submitter: Lisa Haines
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR201

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed amendment to the Oregon Constitution that would require a portion of surplus revenue—funds that would otherwise be returned to personal income taxpayers—to be redirected toward public K–12 education, community colleges, and wildfire prevention and suppression once surplus revenue exceeds a certain threshold.

While these are critically important priorities for our state, this amendment takes the wrong approach for several reasons:

1. It undermines the purpose of the voter-approved “kicker.”

Oregonians have repeatedly affirmed that surplus revenues should be returned to taxpayers when collections significantly exceed projections. The “kicker” serves as a meaningful check on forecasting errors, state spending growth, and taxpayer over-collection. Modifying the Constitution to divert these funds weakens this commitment and disregards voter intent.

2. It links essential, ongoing services to unpredictable, one-time revenue.

Education and wildfire management require stable, reliable, and long-term funding. Surplus revenue is by definition irregular and cannot be counted on year to year. Building essential programs on volatile funding sources creates instability for schools, colleges, and emergency services—exactly the opposite of what these systems need.

3. It avoids addressing systemic budgeting issues.

Redirecting surplus funds allows the state to postpone the harder but necessary work of reforming the budget to prioritize core services within existing revenues. Oregon’s tax structure and spending choices should be evaluated comprehensively rather than patched with inconsistent windfalls.

4. It sets a concerning precedent for future raids on taxpayer refunds.

Once the Constitution is altered to allow partial diversion, future changes could expand the practice, gradually eroding the “kicker” entirely. Constitutional amendments should not be used to carve out special exceptions to well-established fiscal policies that have broad voter support.

5. Oregonians deserve transparency and accountability, not midstream shifts in fiscal policy.

Major changes to how the state handles surplus revenue should be approached with caution, clear public input, and a full understanding of long-term consequences. This proposal circumvents that careful process.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge rejection of this amendment. Oregon can and should fund education and wildfire prevention responsibly—through deliberate budgeting and long-term planning—not by altering the Constitution to redirect tax

refunds that voters have firmly supported for decades.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Haines