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Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

QuickPoint! – Make Oregon the Opportunity State

By Eric Fruits, Ph.D.

Oregonians blame Californians for many of our state's woes. They drive up our housing prices, crowd our roads, and import nanny-state policies like banning plastic bags, plastic straws, and styrofoam cups. Many Oregonians wish they'd just go back home.

But what if the Golden State stopped sending us their residents?

The short answer: We're toast. Over the past two years, Californians accounted for about half of Oregon's population growth. Their college degrees hide Oregon's dismal public education system. The business they bring with them fuels employment growth. And, their incomes provide the tax revenues for Salem's never-ending expansion.

If all that stopped, Oregon would be done for. But will it stop? It might. Oregon's a nice place to live, but nice only gets you so far. They're moving here because California has gotten so bad. If Oregon continues to fall into Golden State levels of dysfunction, Californians looking to leave may decide Texas, Arizona, or Nevada are better places to raise their families and grow their businesses.

I fear that day may come sooner than we'd like. Oregon taxes have skyrocketed, our public schools have stagnated, and the public sector has rolled back crucial services. Oregon lawmakers should enact public policies that promote economic opportunity at all income levels, increase choices in education for Oregon parents, and foster a robust culture of entrepreneurship. That will make our state a great place to visit, live, and work for our current and future residents. If we don't make Oregon the opportunity state, we're toast.

Eric Fruits, Ph.D. is Vice President of Research at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

