

September 29, 2021

Word Count: 204

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QuickPoint! – Save Your Money, Save the State: Keep the Kicker

By Eric Fruits, Ph.D.

A few months ago, Oregonians learned they will be getting a Kicker next year. Now, like clockwork, a noisy network of naysayers is clamoring to kick the Kicker to the curb. I say, “No way!”

Experience has taught us that our Oregon legislature will spend every dollar it can extract from its citizens and businesses. And, if that’s not enough, it will raise taxes to spend even more.

Legislative budgets are not made on the basis of what is needed. Instead, legislators start with what the bureaucrats call the “current service level” based on the previous budget. From there, they expand existing programs and add new programs. Then they do it all over again the next session.

Over time, this method massively ratchets up spending.

Over the last 10 years, Oregon’s general fund has grown at more than double the rate of inflation and population growth.

It would be much worse without the Kicker, which returns to taxpayers the money that is collected in excess of the amount budgeted. That money belongs to us, and the Kicker makes sure we keep it.

Keep the Kicker. It’s a rare and sensible protection against the spend-every-dollar philosophy that afflicts politicians on both sides of the aisle.

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