

Senate Joint Resolution 6

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SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Directs Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction to communicate to school districts information regarding backpack safety.

JOINT RESOLUTION

1
2 Whereas overloaded school backpacks are causing an increasing problem of back pain and
3 spinal strain for students across the nation; and

4 Whereas because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully developed until after a person
5 reaches 16 years of age, overweight backpacks are a source of repeated low-level stress that may
6 result in chronic neck, shoulder or back pain in children; and

7 Whereas according to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 7,000
8 emergency room visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries, and, in 2010 alone, physicians'
9 offices, clinics and hospital emergency rooms treated nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations and
10 fractures related to backpacks; and

11 Whereas studies have shown that heavy loads carried on the back have the potential to injure
12 the soft tissues of the shoulder, cause microstructural damage to nerves and harm internal organs;
13 and

14 Whereas studies have shown that increased curvature of the spine and compressed
15 intervertebral height occur when children wear backpacks that exceed 10 percent of their body
16 weight; and

17 Whereas the Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010 showed back pain as the number one cause
18 of disability worldwide and musculoskeletal disorders as the number two cause; and

19 Whereas children's textbooks tend to be much heavier now than in the past, and in addition to
20 books, students often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band instruments
21 and other equipment considered essential to have readily available; and

22 Whereas more than 90 percent of students carry backpacks, which in studies have been found
23 to weigh as much as 25 percent of a child's body weight; and

24 Whereas backpacks are often worn incorrectly and are slung over one shoulder or allowed to
25 hang significantly below the waistline, increasing the load on the shoulders and causing children to
26 lean forward to compensate for the weight while walking or standing; now, therefore,

27 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

28 That we, the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly:

29 (1) Strongly recommend that all school administrators, teachers, parents and students be edu-
30 cated about the potential health impacts of heavy backpacks and take proactive measures to avoid

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 injuries;

2 (2) Recommend that licensed medical professionals who are trained in recognizing the indicators
3 of scoliosis conduct school scoliosis examinations;

4 (3) Recommend that schools work with their Parent Teacher Associations or Parent Teacher
5 Organizations to assess the extent to which students use overloaded backpacks and to promote in-
6 novative homework strategies that lessen the need to carry all books and other school materials
7 back and forth between home and school each day;

8 (4) Recommend that schools consider the following items when developing backpack education
9 talking points:

10 (a) Schools should inform parents, teachers and students that backpacks should weigh no more
11 than 10 percent of a child's body weight and have wide, padded adjustable straps that fit the child.

12 (b) Schools should encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments
13 to properly distribute the weight of books and equipment.

14 (c) Parents and teachers should instruct students to wear both shoulder straps and not to sling
15 the backpack over one shoulder.

16 (d) Schools should encourage teachers to plan homework such that the heaviest books can be
17 left at school and handouts or workbooks can be used for homework assignments.

18 (e) Schools should employ the use of digital textbooks as federal and state funding becomes
19 available.

20 (f) Schools should consider integrated education about backpacks that utilizes a scale in the
21 classroom, allowing students to weigh their backpacks, track the results on a graph and examine the
22 data to determine what can be done to lighten loads; and

23 (5) Direct the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction to communicate to every school dis-
24 trict in this state the information regarding backpack safety described in this resolution.

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