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On Behalf Of:
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Oregon's "kicker" refund exists for one simple reason: the state consistently over-collects taxes, and the kicker ensures that excess money is returned to the people who earned it. Eliminating or "taking" the kicker undermines taxpayer trust and removes a key accountability mechanism for state budgeting.

First, the kicker is a check on government overspending and poor forecasting. Oregon's revenue projections are often wrong by billions of dollars. Instead of fixing forecasting methods or budgeting more conservatively, the state now argues that it should keep the excess money. That sends the wrong message: when the government makes a mistake, taxpayers pay the price. The kicker incentivizes better budgeting and forces the state to plan responsibly rather than relying on windfalls. Second, the kicker provides real, immediate relief to working Oregonians, especially during times of inflation and high cost of living. Housing, groceries, utilities, and insurance costs have surged. For many families and small business owners, kicker refunds aren't "extra money" — they're breathing room. Removing the kicker shifts financial pressure from government inefficiency onto everyday people who are already stretched thin.

Third, the kicker is a promise the state made to taxpayers. People planned around it. Changing the rules after collecting the money feels like moving the goalposts. If the state can take the kicker today, what stops it from raising taxes tomorrow and justifying it as "necessary"? Trust in government erodes when policies are changed only when they benefit the state and not the public.

Fourth, the real issue is spending priorities, not revenue. Oregon already collects historically high tax revenues. If core services like housing, healthcare, infrastructure, and public safety are underfunded, that points to budgeting and management problems—not a lack of money. Before asking taxpayers to give up refunds they're legally owed, the state should demonstrate stronger fiscal discipline, better project delivery, and measurable results.

Finally, eliminating the kicker removes voter leverage. The kicker is one of the few direct mechanisms taxpayers have to ensure the state doesn't quietly grow government beyond what voters approved. Taking it concentrates more financial power in Salem and less in the hands of citizens.

Bottom line:

The kicker isn't a loophole—it's a safeguard. Taking it rewards bad forecasting, weakens accountability, increases financial strain on households, and breaks trust with taxpayers. Oregon should fix its budgeting process instead of changing the rules to keep money that doesn't belong to the state.