

Topics to watch

Monday, January 23, 2023



2023 LEGISLATURE

The 2023 Legislature started slowly last week, with few posted agendas and little discussion of coming plans. Important agenda-setting agency bills have not been filed yet.

Still some bills have tipped legislators' hands about expected hot topics in the session's first few weeks.

CSL calculation: The process for creating the budget begins with state budget writers calculating "current service level." CSL is supposed to represent the actual amount of money schools need from the state to keep doing what they are already doing, without investments or cuts. For years, the state budget writers have used assumptions and lookbacks, rather than actual school district contract information, to calculate CSL. And for years, OSBA and other education advocates have been critical of the way this calculation occurs. This session it seems likely that House Bill 2739, about how CSL is calculated, [will get a public hearing](#).

Cybersecurity: School districts and other local governments are increasingly likely to be attacked by ransomware or malicious hackers. [HB 2049](#), which would invest in protections for school districts and local governments, will likely be one of the first public hearings in the Joint Information Management and Technology Committee.

Special Education: Across Oregon, many families of students experiencing disability allege that, during the pandemic and even before, school districts have denied students education time and services to which they are legally entitled. Legislators in both chambers have organized to pass legislation to address these concerns. Sen. Sara Gelsler Blouin, D-Corvallis, the topic's most outspoken advocate, has introduced many related bills, including [Senate Bill 575](#) and [SB 578](#). Look for her bills to get a public hearing early this session.

School district employee workforce: School districts have struggled to recruit and retain the best people to work with students and in schools. Legislators in both chambers are poised to take action. Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, chair of the Senate Education Committee, is ready to drive that discussion. Look for a hearing on a bill on the topic early in session, such as [SB 283](#), which has placeholder "study" language but will likely be amended.

The budget: Because Gov. Tina Kotek has not yet produced a Governor's Recommended Budget, there are not yet any agency budget bills. However, no later than Feb. 1, she must produce a budget. After that, education advocates will know which bills the Legislature will use to fund the State School Fund, the Oregon Department of Education and other agencies, and how much legislators are penciling in to start the session.

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