

# Press Release - 2007 Benchmark Report

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## **Is Oregon Making Progress? State Board Says Holding Its Own but with Concerns**

**Contact:**

Rita Conrad

Oregon Progress Board Executive Director

503-378-3201

[rita.r.conrad@state.or.us](mailto:rita.r.conrad@state.or.us)

Salem (OR) — Oregon is holding its own with a growing economy, public safety and livable communities, but other areas give reason for concern, according to an analysis of 91 “Oregon Benchmarks,” which measure the state’s well-being.

The report says some aspects of education, civic engagement, social support and the environment still need improvement in order to meet goals the state has set.

Issued every other year by the Oregon Progress Board, *Achieving the Oregon Shines Vision: The 2007 Benchmark Report* is now available both in hard copy [Highlights](#) and online at [benchmarks.oregon.gov](http://benchmarks.oregon.gov) (no “www” required), where visitors can choose benchmarks and generate a customized report.

The board identified seven trends that showed the biggest improvement, and seven that raised concerns.

The seven biggest improvements occurred in: 1) net job growth; 2) third-grade math; 3) feeling of community; 4) national ranking for hunger; 5) juvenile arrests for property crime; 6) state road condition; and 7) invasive species.

Areas that raised concerns are: 1) continuing fall of per capita income in relation to other states; 2) worker training; 3) public library service; 4) homelessness; 5) high school students carrying weapons; 6) housing affordability (also a concern in the 2005 report); and 7) carbon dioxide emissions.

“Though K-12 education has shown improvement, we cannot take our eye off the critical need to improve educational opportunities for workers and college students,” said Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski. “In order to provide quality jobs for all Oregonians, which is the first goal of *Oregon Shines*, we must first guarantee a qualified workforce.”

The Governor also stressed that his legislative agenda forcefully addresses the concerns raised in the Benchmark Report, with such proposals as the Education Enterprise, stronger tuition help, the Healthy Kids Plan, a prescription drug program, and more participation in the Oregon Health Plan.

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“I’m determined to tackle these concerns head-on,” the Governor said. “I want to get Oregon back on the path to improvement in every benchmark, so that the next Benchmark Report gives every Oregonian reason to be proud of our state.”

“For the past 17 years, the Oregon Progress Board has monitored Oregon’s progress toward achieving the vision the legislature described in *Oregon Shines*,” said Progress Board Vice Chair Mike Jordan. “I’m pleased that we continue to make progress in key areas, but we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent.” For example, Jordan said, Oregon’s housing prices are catching up with the nation, but household purchasing power continues to fall further behind. This contributes to a lack of housing affordability particularly for Oregonians at the lower end of the income spectrum and to all-time high rates of homelessness.

Progress Board member Senator Kurt Schrader said, “As a legislator, I find this information very helpful in addressing many important issues that confront the legislature. The individual benchmark analyses furnish a quick and easy review of how we Oregonians are doing on policy issues that are important to the future of the state, including housing affordability. I hope every Oregonian takes time to read this important report.”

“The Progress Board believes that having a long-term perspective is essential to Oregon’s success in the future,” said Board member Representative Tom Butler. “By looking back over the past ten years, this report enables legislators and other policymakers to put today’s tough issues into better perspective and help determine what approaches are working.”

Board member and Benton County Commissioner Annabelle Jaramillo said, “It is important to remember that these assessments reflect how well the whole is achieving the goals set out in the *Oregon Shines* vision. They reflect goals and aspirations we all share, not just government.”

Attached is the Executive Summary, a summary of trends in each of the seven areas assessed by the report.

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The Progress Board was created by the Oregon Legislature in 1989 to develop a strategic vision for Oregon and monitor progress toward that vision using a set of measures—commonly known as Oregon Benchmarks—of economic, social, and environmental health for the state. Benchmark reports assess each benchmark for signs of progress.

The report is available online at [benchmarks.oregon.gov](http://benchmarks.oregon.gov). Reports can also be obtained by calling the Progress Board at 503-378-3201 in Salem. The Progress Board’s Web site is [www.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB](http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Achieving the Oregon Shines Vision

#### 2007 BENCHMARK REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF OREGON

## **I**s Oregon making progress toward the Oregon Shines goals?

The benchmarks show that Oregon is holding its own in economic issues, public safety and livable communities. However, some aspects of education, civic engagement, social support and the environment still give reason for concern.

### **GOAL #1: QUALITY JOBS FOR ALL OREGONIANS**

*Economy* gets a “Yes, but,” as it did in the 2003 and 2005 reports. Robust job growth slightly outweighs the fact that Oregon’s personal income levels, when compared to the national average, are falling. *Education*, the other half of the equation for creating quality jobs, lost ground in the 2005 report and again in this report. K-12 indicators show progress, but adult educational achievement and lower-than targeted levels of workforce training helped to pull this biennium’s grade down to a “No, but.” Biggest improvements and concerns for this goal:

- *Economy’s biggest improvement is net job growth*, for which the state ranked third in the nation in 2005. However, Oregon’s jobs are not paying as well as in previous years or as well as jobs in other states. The *biggest concern is per capita personal income*, which was 93 percent of the U.S. average in 2005 and has declined steadily since 1996.
- *Education’s biggest improvement is third-grade math*, in which 86 percent of public school third-graders achieved or exceeded standards, surpassing the 2005 target and reaching a decade high. The *biggest concern is the percentage of workers receiving at least 20 hours of training a year*, which consistently scores below 40 percent. The 2005 target is 56 percent and the 2010 target is 75 percent.

### **GOAL #2: ENGAGED, CARING AND SAFE COMMUNITIES**

This goal is tracked along three dimensions. Social Support was downgraded to “No, but” for the first time since 2003 with a host of concerns related to children’s health, child care and support, child abuse and particularly homelessness. Civic Engagement stalled at “No, but” in the last three reports because Oregonians generally don’t understand how their government gets or spends money; the state’s low Standard & Poor’s bond rating makes it more expensive for the state to borrow; and public library service is steadily declining. However, because of improving crime rates and emergency preparedness, Public Safety got a positive assessment (“Yes, but”) in every benchmark report since 2003.

Biggest improvements and concerns for this goal:

- *Civic Engagement’s biggest improvement is feeling of community*. A consistently higher percentage of Oregonians feel a part of their communities compared to pre – 9/11 surveys.

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The *biggest concern is public library service*, where a decade-long trend has steadily moved the benchmark away from its targets.

- Social Support's *biggest improvement is its national rank for hunger*, which improved from last (50th) in 1997 to 26th in 2004. At the same time, the *biggest concern is homelessness*, where Oregon ranked in the bottom 10 percent of all states in 2000. The number of Oregonians in homeless shelters on any given night increased by 50 percent between 2002 (7,394) and 2006 (11,509).
- Public Safety's *biggest improvement is juvenile arrests for property crimes*, the rate of which nearly halved in the last decade. Its *biggest concern is the number of high school students carrying weapons*, which was one in five in 2005.

## GOAL #3: HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE SURROUNDINGS

Community Development is the only one of the seven benchmark categories that improved since the 2003 report. Traffic-related improvements (such as travel delay) upgraded Community Development to a "Yes, but" in the 2005 report. Environment, however, slipped to a "No, but" this biennium. Many of the indicators in this category lack data, but others reveal a lack of progress toward targets for controlling carbon dioxide emissions, recovering estuarine wetlands, reducing municipal waste, and acquiring land for Oregon's state parks.

Biggest improvements and concerns for this goal:

- Community Development's *biggest improvement is state road condition*. An improving trend pushed it beyond the 2010 target five years early. The state's *biggest concern is housing affordability*. In 2006, 82 percent of lower income renters and 46 percent of lower income owners (those with incomes below the state median for each group) paid more than 30 percent of their household income—the amount considered to be reasonable—on housing costs.
- Environment's *biggest improvement is invasive species*, as only one of the hundred most threatening invasive species has become established since 2000. The state's *biggest concern is carbon dioxide emissions*. At 115% of 1990 levels, this benchmark remains nine percentage points above the 2005 target. The weight of scientific evidence suggests that carbon dioxide emissions are a major factor in global warming.