

# Capitol turns classroom for 100 teachers

## Educators learn from government officials

**9:00 PM, Dec. 2, 2011**

The Capitol became a series of classrooms Friday for about 100 teachers who came from across Oregon to learn firsthand from state officials — including Gov. John Kitzhaber — about state government and how it applies to their own classrooms.

The all-day conference was sponsored by the nonprofit Classroom Law Project, based in Portland, which has conducted it for five years.

One of the attendees was Robert Bass, a government teacher since 1983 at Roseburg High School, who a quarter century ago hosted Kitzhaber — then president of the Oregon Senate — as a classroom speaker.

"I learn more from these conferences than I did in college," Bass said. "They are much more related to actual use in the classroom."

The first Friday each December is designated as civics day for teachers.

"Things are changing all the time, whether it's new cases from the Oregon Supreme Court, new laws from the Legislature or actions by the executive branch," said Marilyn Cover, the project's executive director. "So this conference is a chance for teachers to hear from the people (who) work in these trenches every day."

Cover said public-school texts on Oregon government are scarce.

"This conference offers a chance for teachers to talk among themselves about what they are currently using and to hear from the experts," she said. "They are getting content they otherwise have little access to from the people working in Oregon government, and they get new strategies they can use with students."

Among the participants were Secretary of State Kate Brown and Supreme Court Justice Tom Balmer.

Kitzhaber spoke briefly to the teachers, but did not invite questions.

"I want to thank you for the tremendous dedication you have to your students during some of the most trying times we can remember — shortened school days, bigger class sizes, fewer courses," he said. "I think the work you do is compounded by a number of other factors ... that have a direct effect on your ability to teach and their ability to perform."

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