

## Legislative Session 2009: Oregon in Survival Mode

The 2009 Oregon Legislature was able to avert the most devastating cuts to child welfare, juvenile justice, the courts and public defense by raising approximately \$733 million in new revenue. The Legislature cut \$2 billion in spending to help balance the 2009-2011 state budget. The Legislature also approved smaller revenue increases through court and other fees to help reduce cuts to programs across state government.

Opponents have vowed to try to repeal the tax increases through ballot measures. Two tax bills passed by the legislature face repeal efforts. One bill raises the \$10 corporate minimum tax for the first time since 1931. The new, progressive corporate minimum tax scale starts at \$150 for S-corporations, LLCs, partnerships and corporations with \$500,000 or less in Oregon sales. It's capped at \$100,000 for corporations with \$100 million or more in Oregon sales. The other bill raised the marginal income tax rate on individuals who have more than \$125,000 in taxable income and couples with more than \$250,000 in income.

Repeal of these revenue increases would require the Legislature to implement much deeper cuts across state agencies that would endanger children, people with disabilities, seniors and public safety.

**JRP urges you to submit the enclosed pledge to protect vital state programs.**



### Promoting the Well-Being of Children in Foster Care

JRP worked to help ensure that school stability for foster children continues in spite of the economic downturn. As part of the human services budget, the legislature earmarked \$700,000 in flexible funds to ensure that foster children who move continue to have access to transportation to their home schools. The Legislature passed HB 3075, written by JRP, in 2005 in order to address the dismal educational experiences of children in foster care. The legislation allows children to remain in the same school after entering foster care or changing foster homes.

JRP also worked with Rep. Tina Kotek to pass HB 3114, which increases oversight of psychotropic medications prescribed to foster children. Historically, only one-third of foster children were being assessed for their mental health needs within existing state guidelines. However, foster children were also being administered powerful psychotropic medications, often in multiple combinations, before their mental health needs had been fully assessed. HB 3114 requires the assessment of foster children by a mental health professional prior to the prescription of psychotropic medications. The bill also requires an annual "second opinion" when foster children are prescribed more than two such medications or for foster children under six years who are taking any psychotropic medications.

### SUPPORTING JRP AND HELPING CHILDREN IS EASY

**Individual and business contributions support the SchoolWorks and HelpLine programs, as well as our Legislative advocacy. We've made it easier to give. Just go to the JRP web site ([www.jrplaw.org](http://www.jrplaw.org)) and click on the **DONATE** button to make a one-time donation or set up regular donations to support JRP programs throughout the year.**



## Spreading the Word about JRP's Work

Juvenile Rights Project, Inc. traces its roots to 1975 as a program of Multnomah Legal Aid Services. JRP became an independent non-profit corporation in 1985. While JRP is well-known within the juvenile court system and in the Oregon Legislature, we have been a well-kept secret when it comes to the public at large.

We are taking a number of steps to highlight the impact of our work and the resources we offer to vulnerable children, youth and families. With the generous support of the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Autzen Foundation, **JRP has hired Janeen Olsen as our first Director of Development and Communications.** Janeen brings a wealth of non-profit experience, working in development and marketing for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Portland Jazz Festival, Oregon Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and the University of Puget Sound.

JRP is also hosting our first Champions for Children Gala fundraiser at the Portland Classical Chinese Garden on September 19th. The event is focused on raising awareness and raising funds for our SchoolWorks and HelpLine programs. JRP spends 90-cents of every dollar in revenue on programs serving children, youth and families with critical needs.

The staff and Board of Directors have also developed a new mission statement for our organization, along with clear and succinct descriptions of the work we do and the people we serve. Here they are:

### Vision

Our vision is that all children and families in Oregon receive the support they need to be safe and to be successful members of the community.

### Mission

JRP is dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families through legal representation and advocacy in the courts, legislature, schools and community.

### Who We Serve

JRP serves children and youth—primarily those in foster care—who are abused, neglected or in trouble; students who face challenges at school; and parents who need help keeping their families intact.

### Who We Are

We are a team of 35 attorneys, social workers, legal assistants and other specialists who win

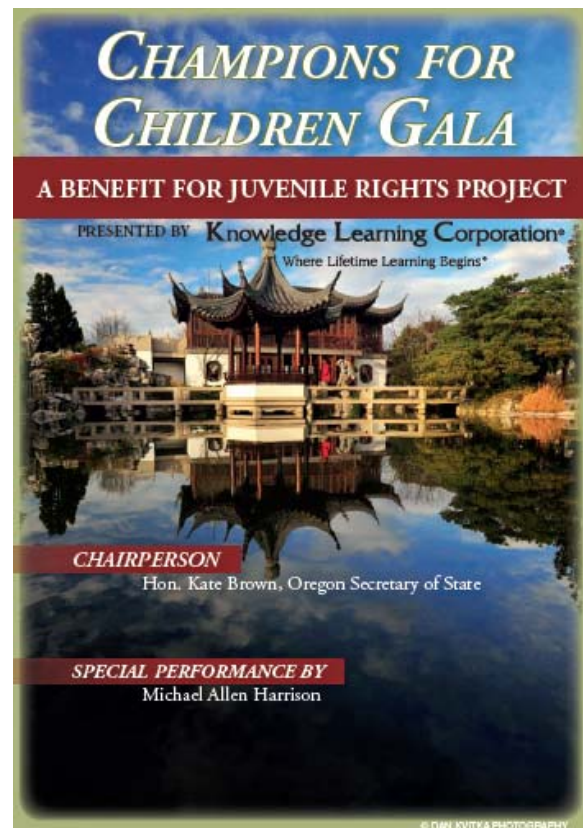
improvements in the lives of vulnerable children and families.

### What We Do

JRP represents children in the juvenile court system, champions laws that benefit children and families in the state legislature, provides the only statewide youth legal services HelpLine, and helps struggling students succeed in school through the SchoolWorks program. JRP's programs compliment one another and result in an approach that is uniquely successful.

I invite you to learn more about JRP by keeping up with our newsletters, attending an event or visiting our web site.

Best regards,  
Mark McKechnie,  
Executive Director



The 2009 Champions for Children Gala is coming soon — September 19th, at the Classical Chinese Garden in downtown Portland. For tickets or sponsorship info contact:

Janeen Olsen at 503.232.2540 Ext. 231 or  
[JaneenO@jrplaw.org](mailto:JaneenO@jrplaw.org) .

## JRP HelpLine Gets Ready for School Year

Whitney Hill, a 2008 summer law clerk at JRP, will return in September to work full time for the JRP HelpLine as the 2009 George M. Fleming Fellow in Health Law from the University of Texas. The fellowship will support her work with the HelpLine for two years, assisting low-income students who face barriers to receiving special education services. Whitney's fellowship proposal highlighted the unfortunate link between school failure and dropout by students with disabilities and their involvement with the juvenile justice system, particularly for youth with mental health or developmental disabilities.



*Whitney Hill,  
George M. Fleming  
Fellow in Health Law*

JRP's HelpLine is a *free* service providing information, referral, advice and brief legal services to youth and to adults concerned about vulnerable children and youth in the community. The HelpLine is a unique resource that responds to 500 calls annually from across the state. Youth and concerned adults seek assistance on a range of issues, from abuse and neglect, to homelessness, civil rights, immigration, guardianship, and access to health care and public education.

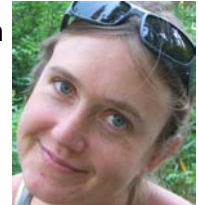
In recent years, one-quarter of all calls to the HelpLine have been related to the educational needs of children and youth, including students who are homeless or living with people other than their parents or guardians, students who need special education support, or students facing expulsion.

JRP's HelpLine attorney, Mary Skjelset, has worked for the last three years at JRP serving youth who faced barriers to educational success. She is also able to offer legal advice and information by phone to youth in other parts of the state.

The HelpLine has assisted numerous students who were denied enrollment to local public schools because they were living with relatives, neighbors or other caring adults who were not their legal guardians. In most cases, these students had been abandoned by their parents or had run away from abusive homes.

Mary has been impressed by a number of HelpLine callers who have found places to live and have found jobs so that they can eke out a living when they are 15, 16 and 17 years-old. Surprisingly, though, many have been turned away from public schools because they are

not accompanied by their guardians. Mary helps to make sure that students like these, who are motivated to finish high school against great odds, are not denied their right to an education. She has been very successful working with districts to make sure that students like these, who are covered by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, can go to school and realize their dreams of success.



*Mary Skjelset,  
HelpLine Attorney*

The HelpLine assists some students to enroll in school and helps make sure that others aren't kicked out. This past spring, Mary assisted an eight-year-old student who was facing expulsion. There had been a great deal of conflict between his mother and the school, and it appeared that the school was trying to push out her son in order to end the conflict. The HelpLine requested that the school district provide a neutral hearings officer who ultimately determined that the school lacked good cause to expel the student.

Mary notes that every single student served by the HelpLine who was facing expulsion this past spring was either African-American or Latino. Students of color tend to be overrepresented in school expulsion in Oregon and around the country.

### **Funding for the HelpLine and SchoolWorks in 2009-2010**

The HelpLine is supported by grants from the Oregon Law Foundation and Spirit Mountain Community Fund, as well as attorney fees from adoptions, and contributions from individuals and corporations.

SchoolWorks received a new three-year grant from the Portland Children's Investment Fund (\$548,216), starting July 1, 2009. In addition to this grant and grants continuing from the Bill and Melinda Gates and Collins Foundations, JRP hopes to raise \$110,000 for the upcoming school year to ensure that both SchoolWorks and the HelpLine can continue to serve the urgent needs of children and youth in the community.

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"JRP has been Oregon's conscience when it comes to the care of our foster children. They have been determined and effective in their advocacy to give children in foster care the kinds of lives we would all want for our children."

--Hon. Kate Brown, Oregon Secretary of State

## JRP Board Grows in 2009

The Juvenile Rights Project, Inc. Board of Directors has elected five new members in 2009, expanding the size of the Board from nine to fourteen. The new members bring an increased diversity of experience to the management of this 34-year-old non-profit organization. The new Board members elected in 2009 are:

**William Crow**, a shareholder at Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt. In addition to his distinguished career as a litigator in complex and high-profile cases, Bill has also offered his skills to support JRP and other public interest firms as co-counsel in our successful efforts to reform the Oregon Health Plan children's mental health system.

**Hon. Dale Koch**, retired Presiding Judge of the Multnomah County Circuit Court. As a juvenile and family court judge for many years, Judge Koch is very familiar with the legal representation provided by JRP.

**Patricia Miles**, a consultant and nationally-

known expert on children's mental health and child welfare systems. Pat has worked with JRP in our successful efforts to reform the children's mental health and child welfare systems in Oregon.

**Barbara O'Hare-Walker**, a retired account executive from United Airlines. Barbara has served on the Boards of the Girl Scouts, Columbia River Council, Inc., and Uniting to Understand Racism.

**Janet Steverson**, professor at the Lewis and Clark Law School. Professor Steverson teaches family law and children's rights seminars and has a long history working with student law clerks at JRP, some of whom later became JRP staff attorneys.

The new members joined existing JRP Board members: Sharon Reese, President; Karen Sheean, Vice President, Emily Shannon, Secretary; Cathy Brewer; Jan Dawson; David Dorman; Christian Oelke; Ann Phillips; and Tim Speth.