

Legislature 'on the couch' with youth health issues

Coalition rates lawmakers on stalled, diluted bills

By TARA MCCLAIN
Statesman Journal

On one scale of legislative success, "jumping" is an A-plus and a "couch" is an F.

The Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition gave the governor and Legislature an overall "on the couch" as a measurement of their midterm progress.

Stalled or diluted bills and budget cuts in the areas of child

Online

View the Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition's legislative score card at www.childrenfirstfororegon.org

nutrition and physical and mental health earned the rating.

"We have to stop looking at schools as nothing more than teachers and books," said Tina Kotek, policy director for Children First for Oregon.

The 36 member organizations of the coalition hope to change lawmakers' status from "couch" to "standing." "Walking" or "jumping" — the equiv-

alent of good, better, best — by the end of the session.

According to the coalition, that would take:

- Passing Senate Bill 228, which requires minimum daily minutes for physical education. It passed the Senate Education Committee and is stalled in the budget committee.

- Resurrecting Senate Bill 560, which would set nutritional standards for food sold in schools. It died in committee.

- Passing Senate Bill 467, which would help students get free and reduced-price lunches through the summer. It is waiting in the budget committee.
- Sending at least \$5.4 billion

in general fund money to schools for the next two years to help avoid cuts to school counseling, psychological and social services.

- Reattaching money to House Bill 3481, which helps schools retrofit buses to emit less toxins, or buy more expensive, but cleaner, biodiesel fuel.

- Refusing to take voter-approved tax money out of the Tobacco Use Prevention Account to pay for general fund services.

tmclain@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6705