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Gov. Ted Kulongoski proposes government reset

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Jessica Van Berkel, The Oregonian

Cuts to labor benefits, reductions in sentencing for some prison inmates and changes to educational structure were a few of the recommendations from Gov. Ted **Kulongoski's Reset Cabinet**.

In his final speech at the City Club of Portland, Kulongoski offered the group's solutions to state budget problems, which he called the "economic equivalent of a 10-point earthquake."

Stressing the need for everyone to shoulder the economic burden, Kulongoski said the state couldn't continue to cover health care and retirement benefits of public employees at the same level.

He also suggested collective bargaining with school employees and a redesign for K-12 education.

"Our approach to education governance and accountability is fragmented," he said. Having individual governing boards for each school district is a broken system, he said.

"The last eight years has only strengthened my belief that responsibility for education should rest with the governor," Kulongoski said. Appointing the superintendent of public instruction should also be the governor's responsibility, he said.

Online learning and virtual classrooms need to be emphasized and charter schools embraced, he said.

He also suggested reducing sentences for some non-violent offenders and looking into ways to divert offenders from prison.

Incarceration is the "most expensive tool in the public safety tool box," Kulongoski said.

The prison population has doubled to 14,000 since the mid-1990s and resulted in a 250 percent increase in the Department of Corrections budget.

Kulongoski plans to travel across Oregon over the next six months to discuss the proposals with Oregonians.

-- **Jessica Van Berkel**