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PRESS release

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New report shows social and economic progress is a mixed bag for Oregon's Minorities.

SALEM – A new report called *Oregon Benchmarks: A Progress Report on Oregon Racial and Ethnic Minorities* from the Oregon Progress Board shows that many social and economic indicators improved for Oregon's racial and ethnic minorities during the 1990s, but that major disparities still exist. "The good news is Oregon's minority populations made modest progress of the key indicators included in this study" said Progress Board Executive Director Jeff Tryens. "Educational attainment improved for African Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans. Poverty rates dropped significantly for all minority groups. Also, the high arrest rate for African Americans fell by nearly 30 percent."

The bad news is most Oregon minorities still lag far behind the average on the indicators examined and, in some cases, have actually lost ground," said Tryens. Hispanics, African Americans and Native Americans generally lag well behind Whites in the areas examined. Except for Asian Americans, minorities of all categories are roughly twice as likely to live in poverty as Whites and about half as likely to own their homes. Unlike most other minority groups, Hispanics worsened in high school and college attainment. Both Hispanics and African Americans saw a decrease in percentage of those owning their homes. Asian Americans, however, are at or above White rates for college completion, eighth grade reading, eighth grade math and high school dropout.

An area of particular concern for the Board is the low-percentage of African American, Native American and Hispanic students achieving eighth grade reading and math standards. In almost every instance, the gap between White non-Hispanic students and these students in 2002 are greater or the same as it was in 1992. In 10 years, these students are still at or below where White non-Hispanic students were in 1992. "This is our workforce of the future," said Board Vice Chair Brett Wilcox. "Oregon cannot expect to compete in today's global economy unless all our students are achieving reading and math standards."

(more)

This important study by the Progress Board clearly demonstrates the need for more targeted attention by public policy makers,” said Senator Avel Gordly. “Let us all remember that Oregon’s racial and ethnic communities include taxpayers who have not benefited equitably from public policy making in education, health care, housing and employment practices.”

The report, based on data from the U.S. Census and state sources, documents the progress Oregon’s minority populations have made over the past decade regarding the state’s Oregon Benchmark targets. The report examines trends in three areas: education; health and safety; and financial status. The status of Oregon’s four major racial and ethnic minorities – African American, Asian American, Native American and Hispanic – is contrasted with Whites and non-Hispanics. Also, whenever available, Oregon trends are compared to the U.S. average.

The report can be found at <http://www.econ.state.or.us/opb/parity/re2002.htm> and is also available free to Oregonians by calling 503-986-0173.

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