

## Rocky Mountain News

### Democrats suggest plan to fix old schools

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By Associated Press

Some of the state's top Democrats announced a proposal Sunday to use income from school trust lands to fix crumbling schools.

They said they hoped the plan could raise up to \$1 billion. The plan would leverage \$30 million to \$40 million of revenue annually from school trust lands to raise up to \$500 million in capital. Local matching funds would raise the rest.

School trust lands are property that the federal government granted to states to support public education.

State Treasurer Cary Kennedy said income from school trust lands has been growing dramatically. Revenue was almost \$57 million in 2004 but is expected to be \$90 million in 2008.

"We've seen a huge upswing in mineral lease revenues, royalties, rents and interest over the past few years," Kennedy said in a written statement.

Senate President-elect Peter Groff said the plan would not raise taxes or affect the state's general fund.

House Minority Leader Mike May, R-Parker, could not immediately be reached for comment Sunday night. Leaders of the Colorado Children's Campaign, a children's advocacy group, said they support the measure.

The plan was devised after state legislators toured decaying schools statewide over the summer.

House Speaker Andrew Romanoff said part of a roof collapsed in an elementary school in Yuma County, and Crowley County uses gutters in a high school gym to divert water leaking through a roof that school officials can't afford to fix.

"Students and teachers should be able to focus on reading, writing and arithmetic, not flooding, fire hazards and broken septic tanks," he said.

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