

Oregon Democrats aim to change quorum

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — After two walkouts this year by minority Republican senators in the Oregon Legislature, Democrats said Friday they will ask voters to change quorum rules, allowing the statehouse to convene with only a simple majority of lawmakers present instead of the current two-thirds requirement.

The boycotts by the Republicans prevented the Senate from convening. Democrats dropped proposals on gun control and vaccines and Democratic Gov. Kate Brown ordered the state police to bring the missing lawmakers back during the second walkout.

The Republicans left the state to avoid apprehension, and returned only after Democratic Senate President Peter Courtney announced her party lacked the votes to unilaterally pass a sweeping bill to combat global warming.

Senate Democrats said that Majority Leader Ginny Burdick will introduce a constitutional amendment in the 2020 legislative session to lower quorum requirements. Voters would then decide on the proposed change in the 2020 election.

“Stopping the work of the people by denying a quorum is unconscionable and undemocratic,” Burdick, a Portland Democrat, said in a statement. “I hope our Republican colleagues now see that this is not a tactic that should ever be used again.”

There was no immediate comment from Republicans.

“Democrats were not happy when Republicans walked out on them this year. I believe Republicans were just as upset when Democrats walked out on them in 2001,” Courtney said.

Courtney also announced Friday that the Legislature

will not fine the 11 state senators who left the state to deny a quorum during the second walkout that lasted nine days. They had faced a \$500 fine for each day they missed. Courtney said attempting to collect the fines would have resulted in costly litigation.

“Walkouts are a measure that should never be used,” he said. “It deeply saddens me that we cannot have debates without resorting to such extremes.”

Senate Democrats said all but three other states require a simple majority for a quorum. In Oregon, the current quorum means 20 senators and 40 members of the House of Representatives must be present to conduct business. Under a simple majority, only 16 must be present in the Senate and 31 in the House.

SURVEY: Results will inform contract discussions

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fund that contract through their tax dollars. The contract is for \$611,849, which, according to the City, represents over half of the property tax revenue within the city.

That contract is up for renewal.

Those who live outside the city limits were invited to share their opinions with City Manager Corey Misley at cmisley@ci.sisters.or.us.

The survey asks citizens to rate the degree to which issues like property crime; violent crime; illegal drugs or alcohol; traffic safety are problems for Sisters. It asks what citizens consider to be the biggest threat to public safety in Sisters and gauges how safe people feel in their community.

The survey questions are



PHOTO PROVIDED

The city of Sisters currently contracts with the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement services.

available for viewing with the online version of this story at www.nuggetnews.com.

Misley told *The Nugget* that the City hopes to have surveys in hand by September 10. He expects to be able to summarize survey results by the end of September. In an op-ed in *The Nugget* last week, Misley explained that, as the City evaluates its law enforcement services, “There are effectively two options: Contract with a law

enforcement agency or reinstate our own police department. The former requires looking at possible contractual partners and negotiating acceptable terms in that contract. The latter requires a comprehensive analysis of the associated expenses and infrastructure and timing ... and potential long-term, sustainable funding options.”

Misley told *The Nugget* that the input from the survey will inform that analysis.

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