

EDITORIAL

Legislators must work for citizens

The Oregon Legislature is back in session and legislators, we hope, will get back to work.

Sessions of the legislature have been getting longer every biennium, but less work seems to be getting done. Citizens are being forced to do the jobs of elected legislators by way of the ballot.

Legislators haven't been doing the job they were elected to do.

Nineteen measures appeared on the November ballot. Unfortunately, many of these had to be voted on by Oregonians in an election because the Oregon Legislature failed in its mission to serve the needs of the state's citizens, and Oregonians felt that they had to step in to do the job.

Some legislators, such as Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem, have introduced a slew of bills in the legislature. However, a number of the bills, such as Mannix's insemination bill, have nothing to do with the needs of Oregonians today. Oregon needs politicians who will stand up for education and work to strengthen the state's economy. The side issues, such as insemination, are irrelevant and only serve to distract legislators from their more important work.

If legislators get down to business and work to solve actual problems that matter in this state, it may help vent the frustration of citizens away from the now-overused initiative process. The more measures that make it to the ballot, the fewer the number of voters who want to research and vote on them.

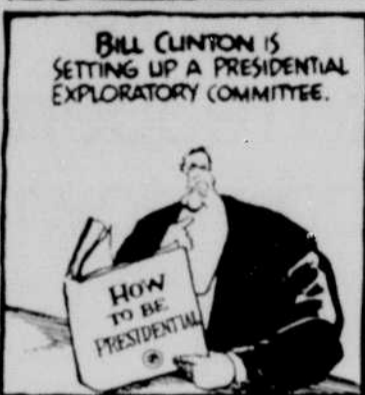
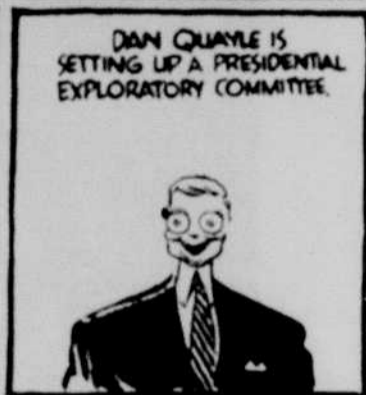
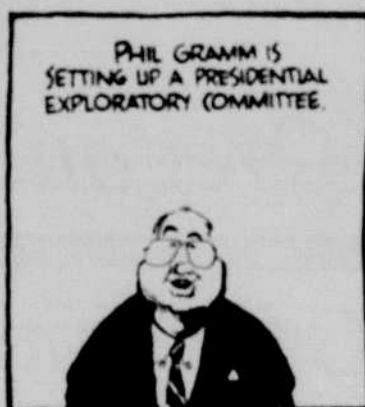
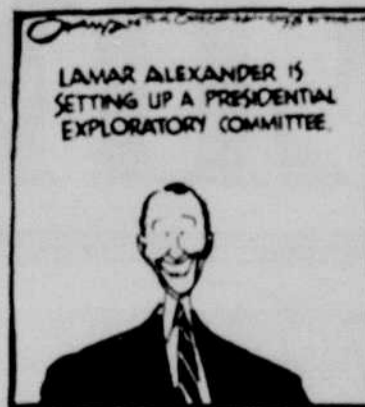
The fact that so many bills have been introduced may be a step in the right direction, but it doesn't necessarily mean that legislators are doing their jobs. Oregonians should keep watchful eyes on their legislators to make sure that they do the job that Oregonians elected them to do.

Legislators are elected to represent Oregonians. While some on the fringes of political movements may have their own narrow agendas, the majority of Oregonians don't believe that issues such as banning insemination is worthy of legislators' time. There are much more urgent problems that must be dealt with.

However, the number of bills proposed in the legislature indicates one thing. Oregonians want change now and won't stand for the status quo. This is demonstrated in part by the Republicans taking control of both houses of the legislature this year. Business as usual just isn't good enough in Salem anymore.

Legislators should heed the warning of citizens or else they will find themselves out of jobs and force citizens to use the initiative process to do their jobs for them. Save citizens the trouble. Legislators should do the job that they were elected to do.

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■ OPINION

Big government not the answer



BRIAN WOMACK

Tonight we once again will, most likely, get to see Bill Clinton redefine himself.

Tonight is the State of the Union address and for once, he might get to set the agenda instead of reacting to it. Remember late last year when he redefined himself and explained his new set of core values after the election? Well, tonight he just might do it again.

Yet, after hearing his response to the election landslide in early November, I thought he might have started to "get it."

He gave a glimpse of what we might hear tonight when he spoke to the Democratic National Committee on Saturday. Regrettably, his analysis of why the election swung the way it did didn't show that, however.

For instance, he said part of the reason the election went the way it did was there was just too much good news so it wouldn't get reported. Yeah, it's amazing that too much good news could overturn forty years of history.

Of course, as with every politician who loses, he had to say that the Democrats "didn't get their message out."

I really knew Clinton didn't get it when I heard him start defending big government and proceed to say that the government was indeed the answer to many of society's problems.

Mr. Clinton, if there was any message given last November, it was, "Get government off my back," not, "Let me ride on its back."

But Clinton will probably keep telling us that we want more government.

Americans do want a government that will fulfill the needed services it provides as outlined in the Constitution. We want a military force that will provide for the necessary defense. A government that will protect such

freedoms as speech, religion, the right to bear arms and the right to assembly.

But, for the most part, we continually see Washington getting in our way and restricting our freedoms.

Here's a good example. A Wyoming legislature in the state House, Roger Huckfeldt, is coming out against the Endangered Species Act in a big way.

He is proposing legislation that would offer a bounty of \$500 on wolves that stray from Yellowstone National Park. His bill also has a provision requiring the State of Wyoming to assist anyone who is charged with the violation of the Endangered Species Act for killing a wolf.

The wolf has been listed as an endangered species and is being reintroduced into the wild in some places such as Yellowstone.

Heckfeldt calls his bounty bill a "good neighbor law."

"If you had a mean dog, you're not allowed to let the mean dog loose," he said. "We're just letting the federal government know, 'Be a good neighbor. Don't let your dogs run loose,'" he said.

You might say this is a big overreaction. Just abide by the law and go on with life, you might suggest.

But the problem is that Wyoming is full of ranches and ranchers. Wolves threaten their livelihood. Wolves can destroy their livestock and thus their way of putting food on the table.

They're not called "vicious killers" for nothing.

This is not unique to Wyoming either. Idaho, Colorado and Montana have other proposals that react to the wolves' reintroduction to the wild in the same manner.

It just shows how the locals are getting upset at Washington getting too big and powerful as the

election landslide showed.

Another example of government's encroachment is Clinton's own health care proposal.

With a problem of some Americans not having health care (and not even that big of percentage lacking coverage), Bill and Hillary proposed a massive takeover of the American health care system. This sector of our economy makes up a whopping one-seventh of our economy. With employer mandates and health care alliances, Americans saw something they didn't like — further encroachments on their freedoms.

Washington was forced to react. Even with a flip-flop on the issue (as Clinton loves to do) on full coverage and other provisions, the Democrats could not scrape together a plan that would be passed by a Democratically controlled Senate. Public sentiment ran too strong against it.

Yet we still hear the same old lines of more government is good. On Saturday, Clinton told his Democrat friends that it was time to "stand up and do what is right" because it will eventually turn out "OK" in the end.

But the majority of Americans know if his definition of "right" is going to be bigger government, it will never turn out fine because we've seen how those policies fail.

So if tonight Clinton attempts to lay out his vision that includes smaller and less intrusive government, he will have a much easier time getting on the right sides of both the new Senate and House and the voters. If he continues to show his liberal colors, he'll only end up watching the election returns in the fall of 1996 with a concession speech in hand.

Brian Womack is a columnist for the Emerald.

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