

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

## Time for a political reset

**Editorial from The Oregonian:**

The final weeks of the 2019 legislative session made for some ugly politics. In between Senate Republicans' walkout and Democrats' hobbling of Oregonians' ballot-initiative power, partisan conflict metastasized — both in and out of Salem. Sine die, it seemed, marked the opportunity for legislators and Oregonians as a whole to break from the drama and hit the reset button.

That reset, however, has yet to occur. Frustrated by the death of a carbon cap-and-trade bill, Gov. Kate Brown announced last week that she may resort to executive orders to carry out some of the ideas and policies included in House Bill 2020. While Brown is right to continue pressing for carbon-pricing legislation, she should abandon any efforts to implement such controversial policies by fiat. What Oregon needs most is thoughtful leadership that rallies people behind a common goal, not flexing of political muscle.

There's already been far too much of that. Senate Republicans, mired in minority status, staged a walkout twice this session, fleeing the Capitol in order to deny the Senate a quorum. The first time, they disappeared to delay a vote on a new business tax for education, returning only after securing promises to kill two unrelated bills. The second time, they stayed out even longer, holding legislative operations hostage to block passage of HB 2020, which, they argued, would hit rural communities and their industries especially hard.

Their message, however, was soon drowned out after Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, warned that any Oregon State Police troopers sent to bring him back to Salem better be bachelors and "come heavily armed." But such muscle flexing ultimately won't help Republicans, despite the bill's demise. Boquist now faces a formal complaint in the Senate, as he should — there's simply no conceivable defense for making such threats. And Republicans have handed Democrats a potent weapon in future elections. Why should voters choose Republicans when they admit — twice in one session — that their only tool to effect change is a constitutional gimmick? While legislators must stand up for the interests of their constituencies, they also must let voters be the ones to hold lawmakers and their work accountable.

It should be noted that HB 2020 was not doomed by the Republicans' no-show, but by three Democratic senators who ultimately decided that the legislation posed more pain than promise for their constituents.

As obvious a problem as climate change is, convincing people what to do, how much to do or even whether Oregon should do anything at all is far more complex. To Brown's credit, she said she will first push for a legislative solution before resorting to executive action. She is also directing her carbon policy office to work with rural manufacturers and transportation entities to figure out how they can meet emissions goals.

But this past session showed that even with a supermajority of Democrats, carbon pricing isn't a slam dunk. Brown should not treat it as if it should be.



**OTHER VIEWS**

## Push-ups won't make the Biden campaign

Can a candidate who is leading the field by 12 points be weak? That's the question of Joe Biden's run for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The fact is, Biden's campaign is showing signs of weakness. So is the candidate himself. And doing push-ups, as Biden suggested he might do to show up President Trump, won't make him any stronger.

In mid-May, Biden led the sprawling Democratic field by 26 points in the RealClearPolitics average of national polls. By late May, the lead was 17 points. By late June, it was 15 points. Today, it is 12.

So Biden's lead is still big, but it's less than half of what it was not that long ago.

What might be more concerning to Biden supporters are the signs Biden is not running at full strength — that the 76-year-old former vice president has lost a step.

Some voters became concerned about that at the first Democratic debate on June 27, when rival Sen. Kamala Harris hit Biden with an attack about his opposition to busing to desegregate schools in the 1970s. (Harris began the exchange with a zinger: "I do not believe you are a racist.") Even though Biden's old position had been in the news, he seemed unprepared. His response was feeble and disorganized, ending with, "My time is up. I'm sorry."

Afterward, Biden complained that there was no way to explain a nuanced issue in the 30 seconds required by a televised debate.

In a conversation Tuesday with MSNBC's Mika Brzezinski, Biden admitted he was blindsided by Harris. "I didn't expect that particular attack," Biden said, "and that question starting off, 'I know you're not a racist.'" He complained again about debate time limits.

And then Brzezinski asked, "The public is interested in how you're going to fight Donald Trump. Kamala Harris — if you weren't ready for her, are you ready to fight this guy who doesn't play fair?"

"My strategy is just to go out," Biden responded, "and remember that famous expression my grandpop used to use, when they said to Harry Truman, give 'em hell, Harry, and he said, 'No, I'm



**BYRON YORK**  
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

just going to tell the truth, they're going to think it's hell."

Biden explained that he expects the campaign to be ugly and that Trump will not run an "honorable" race. "But I'm not backing down at all from him," Biden said. Yes, he was surprised when Harris "said something so off the wall to me," but Biden pledged to "take on" the president.

It wasn't exactly confidence-inspiring. And then Brzezinski asked what Biden would do if Trump "starts making fun of your age, your mental state, starts going after you ..."

"I'd say, 'Come on, Donald,'" Biden said. "Come on, man. How many push-ups you want to do here, pal? I mean, jokingly. Run with me, man." Biden went on to explain that he often runs when he takes part in parades so he can make sure to meet as many people and shake as many hands as possible.

It was the answer of a man who knows the public is concerned about his vigor. Yes, Trump himself is pushing the limits of presidential age — he was 70 when he took office. But if Biden is elected, he will be 78 upon starting the presidency — the same age Trump would be upon finishing a second term.

At a recent Sen. Harris town hall in South Carolina, a number of voters — not just Harris supporters but also Democrats still shopping for a candidate — expressed doubts about Biden's staying power.

"He's getting slow," said one voter. "He can't think that quick, on the go. He gets shaken. I don't think he could beat Trump on stage in a real debate. I think Trump would just tear him up."

"I think he's dropping off," said another. "He's losing momentum right now."

"We think maybe his time has come and gone," said yet another, speaking for himself and his wife.

No number of push-ups will fix that. That is not to say that Biden is without strengths. He is still well ahead

**Write to us**

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only).

We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish poetry, consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged. Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.

Email your letters to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com) or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850.

**MY VOICE**

My Voice columns should be 500 words. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those published elsewhere.

Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).

in the national polls, as well as early state polls in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina. He is still raising a lot of money, although much of it comes from large donors who have hit the legal contribution limit, while other candidates have lots of small donors who can give again and again and still stay under the limit.

But Biden, the man who has spent more than four decades in federal office, still has to convince voters he has what it takes for four, and perhaps eight, more years. So far, he hasn't gotten that job done.

**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

**SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE**

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50  
You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.  
Call **541-963-3161** to subscribe.

Stopped account balances less than \$5 will be refunded upon request.

Subscription rates per month:  
By carrier.....\$11.80  
By mail, all other U.S. ....\$15



## THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896  
(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by EO Media Group, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

**COPYRIGHT © 2019 THE OBSERVER**  
The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone:  
**541-963-3161**

Toll free (Oregon):  
1-800-422-3110  
Fax: 541-963-7804  
Email:  
[news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com)  
Website:  
[www.lagrandeobserver.com](http://www.lagrandeobserver.com)  
Street address:  
1406 Fifth St., La Grande

**POSTMASTER**  
Send address changes to:  
The Observer, 1406 Fifth St.,  
La Grande, OR 97850  
Periodicals postage paid at:  
La Grande, Oregon 97850

**STAFF**

Publisher.....Karrine Brogotti	Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick
Regional circulation director.....Kelli Craft	Customer service rep.....Mollie Lynch
News clerk.....Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....Karen Fye
Sports editor.....Ronald Bond	Advertising representative.....Juli Bloodgood
Reporter.....Dick Mason	Advertising representative.....Amy Horn
Reporter.....Sabrina Thompson	Graphic design supervisor.....Dorothy Kautz
Classifieds.....Devi Mathson	Graphic design.....Cheryl Christian
Customer service rep.....Sharon Magnuson	

Chris Rush, Regional Publisher